

The background of the entire cover is an abstract painting by Max Ernst. It features a complex, layered texture with various shades of grey, brown, and beige. Overlaid on this are several large, irregular shapes in deep blue and teal. These shapes are interconnected by a network of thin, dashed red lines, creating a sense of movement and structure. The overall effect is one of a dreamlike, prehistoric landscape.

prehistoric Future

max ernst and the return of painting between the wars

RALPH UBL

TRANSLATED BY ELIZABETH TUCKER

PREHISTORIC FUTURE

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MAX ERNST AND THE
RETURN OF PAINTING
BETWEEN THE WARS

RALPH UBL Translated by Elizabeth Tucker

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PREFACE

I wrote this book in Vienna and Berlin between 1998 and 2002. It was first published in 2004. For the present translation, I left the main body of the German original unaltered except for some minor clarifications and corrections of factual errors. The introduction has been completely rewritten and a new afterword added. These two parts include references to scholarly work published after 2004 that is of particular importance to this study.

Looking back at the various stages of my work on Max Ernst, I am filled with gratitude for the support I enjoyed along the way. First of all, my thanks go to Friedrich Teja Bach. Without his dedication as adviser and his scholarly example, I would have never had the courage to commit myself to this project. From my Viennese friends, I have learned more than I can say. Ever since our student days, Wolfram Pichler, Barbara Wittmann, Karin Gludovatz, Markus Klammer, and Stefan Neuner have been vital sources of encouragement and inspiration. I would not have dared to come back to my first book if it had not been the occasion of a few stimulating exchanges over the last ten years. Particularly important in this regard has been the impression of conversations with Gottfried Boehm, Michael Fried, Mark Haxthausen, Josef Helfenstein, Inka Mülder-Bach, Robert Pippin, Beate Söntgen, Nicola Suthor, Juliane Vogel, Gerhard Wolf, and Christopher Wood. I also want to thank Andrei Pop, who, at the very last moment, made two important suggestions. Last but not least, I want to express my warmest gratitude to Elizabeth Tucker for her elegant and thoughtful translation.

INTRODUCTION

Max Ernst's pictures can be read as shrewd experiments in various techniques. They test the possibilities of collage, frottage, grattage, different methods of painting and printing, but also wordplay—and the mutual imitation and intersection of these devices. Louis Aragon introduced this view as early as 1923, in his text “Max Ernst, peintre des illusions” (“Max Ernst, Painter of Illusions”), in which he demonstrated the novelty and uniqueness of the Dadaist's works through a comparison with cubist collage. According to Aragon, while the cubists pasted newsprint into their pictures because they wanted to emphasize the “reality” of the painting—in other words, its tactile support—in his collages Ernst employs not materials but images: “printed drawings, drawings from advertisements, popular images, images from dictionaries and newspapers.”¹ These images are subject to an array of working processes. They are cut apart, retouched, and photographically reproduced; they are reassembled, traced, and copied in paint: “Each of these tableaux attests to the discovery of an alternative technique.”² The goal, however, is not to call attention to the material aspects of these different procedures and make their operations into the theme of art, but rather to manipulate the found images in such a way that they gain a new meaning. Aragon describes Ernst as a virtuoso of artistic procedure who plays with the operations of the human mind: Ernst has created “a type of intellectual collage.”³ That same year, 1923, Aragon's friend and fellow soldier of Dada, André Breton, wrote a text on Ernst that presents an entirely different artist. This Ernst is possessed of a “marvelous ability”⁴ that causes the unity of space and time, memory and personal identity, to break apart. This ability makes him a poet who does not understand his own visions anymore—as Breton implies, it makes him a poet whose relationship to his visions is no longer merely “Platonic,” but bodily.⁵ Film provides a similar experience by placing before the eyes distant, animate phantoms and speeding them up or slowing them down, enlarging or reducing their size. The comparison with the new medium allows Breton to conceive of the artist not as the master of his own techniques, but rather as himself a medium:

the same explosive power courses through him as through the inspired poet, as well as through film.

While Breton emphasizes the artist's receptivity, Aragon is interested in the artist's procedures. This contrast between passivity and activity can also be observed in Ernst's writings. By means of their form, they make it apparent that they were meticulously fabricated. Even the title of his autobiographical notes, presented to an American readership in 1942, mixes the factual and the legendary: "Some Data on the Youth of M.E. as Told by Himself" anticipates a reader who will detect the ironic disparity between the gathering of data and autobiographical narration. In the first, German version, the notes are titled "Wahrheits- und Lügengewebe"⁶ ("Tissue of Truth, Tissue of Lies"). In their content, however, this and other Ernst texts are devoted to advancing the thesis that artworks are symptoms of psychic processes that evade the artist's control. As an example, there is the frequently cited passage in which Ernst relates the origin of collage:

One rainy day in 1919, finding myself in a village on the Rhine, I was struck by the obsession which held under my gaze the pages of an illustrated catalogue showing objects designed for anthropologic, microscopic, psychologic, mineralogic, and paleontologic demonstration. There I found brought together elements of figuration so remote that the sheer absurdity of that collection provoked a sudden intensification of the visionary faculties in me and brought forth an illusive succession of contradictory images, double, triple and multiple images, piling up on each other with the persistence and rapidity which are peculiar to love memories and visions of half-sleep. . . . It was enough at that time to embellish these catalogue pages, in painting or drawing, and thereby in gently reproducing only that which saw itself in me, a color, a pencil mark, a landscape foreign to the represented objects, the desert, a tempest, a geological cross-section, a floor, a single straight line signifying the horizon . . . thus I obtained a faithful fixed image of my hallucination and transformed into revealing dramas my most secret desires—from what had been before only some banal pages of advertising.⁷

Art has its origin in a passive eye that is both overwhelmed and stimulated by the heterogeneity of already-existing images, and the artist's work is restricted to the performance of a secondary service ("gently reproducing only that which saw itself in me"). Nevertheless, at this point, one is compelled to ask: In what

way does this passage describe collage? In other places, Ernst makes it clear that he does not conceive of collage as the activity that is performed with scissors and glue: “Ce n’est pas la colle qui fait le collage.”⁸ (It isn’t the glue that makes collage.) Rather, collage is the basic principle of all the different procedures he used in his Dadaist and surrealist works, inasmuch as they all lead to the same revolutionary goal. Frottage, grattage, various printing and reproduction processes, wordplay, and also collage with glue and scissors all aim for “the magisterial eruption of the irrational in all domains of art, of poetry, of science, in the private life of individuals, in the public life of peoples.”⁹ Collage in this expanded sense is not a technique for the artist’s manipulation; it is a form of image production that takes possession of the artist’s visual experience and is capable of affecting all people. However, even when Ernst asserts that collage is not a goal-oriented fabrication but an unconscious production that subverts human intentions, the way his writing is crafted simultaneously indicates a different artist—one who with meticulous care, but also with tongue in cheek, has laid a “tissue of lies and truth” over his past and his poetics. Ernst declined to choose between the virtuosic use of artistic devices and the surrender to an unconscious production. His writings gloss over the difference between these alternatives by showing both possibilities, depending on whether one considers their content or their rhetorical form. For Ernst, collage is always both: it is an unconscious process and simultaneously an artistic procedure with a superior capacity to emphasize the moment of fabrication.

Art history, however, has not shown any interest in this vacillation. The most important works on this topic can be characterized by their taking up one of the two attitudes suggested by Aragon and Breton in 1923. On the one hand, Ernst’s artful handling of diverse techniques and heterogeneous image sources presented a rich field for discoveries. It was up to art historians to determine whether a work was a collage or an overpainting and to reconstruct the stages through which it had passed: how certain images had been cut apart and re-assembled, how the result had been photographed or copied in oils, how the oil painting had then been used as an underlay for a frottage. The images that Ernst had used as raw materials were traced to sources ranging from a teaching aids catalog, which figures prominently in his Cologne works, to the illustrations and popular science books of the nineteenth century, which form the basis for many of the pictures in his collage novels.¹⁰ On the other hand, art historians persisted

in developing new, and to an extent also increasingly refined, interpretations of Ernst's pictures as symptoms of an unconscious production. Here, Freud's and later Lacan's psychoanalysis offered the theoretical framework.¹¹ One also recalls that Walter Benjamin, Sigfried Giedion, and Theodor W. Adorno saw in Ernst's collages a collision of the present era with the nineteenth century, which they diagnosed as the product of modern history: modernity represses its own past and transforms it into a foreign epoch that seems as far removed as prehistoric time.¹²

In these two approaches to Ernst's work, one can see yet another example of the well-known (and highly unproductive) division of art history in general into a concentration on material pictures and their historical genesis, on the one hand, and a theoretically inspired criticism, on the other. Rather than pursuing either of these strategies at the other's expense, I would like to propose that this division in the research is the manifestation of a conflict already virulent in Dada and surrealism between two ideas of what the art of the avant-garde was based on: It was attributed either to a new poetics that could be described through particular procedures and their implementation or to a new state of openness to powers that fundamentally evade human attempts at fabrication. To take this perspective is to position the avant-garde and art history's view of it within the larger theoretical context of the modern aesthetic of originality. Nineteenth-century romanticism through modernism can be described as the history of various attempts to reconcile originality—that is, a production that even the artist cannot repeat because its sources are not readily accessed—with the routine of the studio. The fabrication of a painting was conceived as an unrepeatable process dependent on singular factors that reveal within the artist a deeper origin of art. These factors include momentary bodily or emotional states, presence in a particular location, particular light conditions, certain paints, brushes, or models, and, finally, new procedures in the application of paint, in composition, and in painting in general. Under these conditions, procedures not only served in the fabrication of a painting; they were intended to relate the process of fabrication to a production that the artist himself did not control. The term “techniques of originality” has therefore been suitably applied.¹³ The avant-garde took up this problematics and radicalized it by giving equally urgent emphasis to both technicity and originality, thus bringing them into opposing positions. The artwork is reduced to the result of various procedures; collage or the readymade exposes an artwork's status as

sheer artifact.¹⁴ However, in the different avant-garde movements since futurism, higher or deeper powers of production—life, the unconscious, language, capital, the body, and so on—are summoned as the real authorities of art. It seems to me that for the art historian, it cannot be a question of aiming for one of these two poles of artistic production. Rather, the field of tension between them must be examined. In this way, an avant-gardist such as Ernst can be understood as an artist who was committed both to the reduction of art to its procedures as well as to its channeling of unavailable powers, and who conceived of this double commitment as a productive contradiction.

Before I turn to this project, I would like to do my part to clarify what the terms “procedure” and “unconscious production” can be taken to mean. It is important to note that “procedure” cannot automatically be equated with a technical innovation. Ernst was right to assert that collage does not come from glue. This and other procedures can only be analyzed in their respective specific contexts of application, which themselves are difficult to isolate. To begin with, the context of application encompasses more than the single work; it also involves the ideological, social, and historical implications that were associated with a procedure at a particular point in time. Thus, I will show that the context of frottage as Ernst used it in 1925 includes (among other factors) the theory of surrealist automatism, the idea that photography was an indexical medium, the history of educational illustrations, the love triangle between Max Ernst and Gala and Paul Éluard, and, finally, the relationship of frottage to other procedures such as collage or overpainting. In abstract terms, artistic procedures are not merely available or newly developed techniques; they are the result as well as the driving force of a historical process that cannot very readily be isolated.

With the same historicizing approach, I would like to approximate what I previously referred to as “unconscious production.” It would surely make sense to view this unconscious production in light of a given theory, such as Freud’s or Lacan’s psychoanalysis, Breton’s automatism, or Benjamin’s thoughts on the nineteenth century as the unconscious prehistory of modernism. One could then ask to what extent Ernst’s works correspond to these theoretical models—whether they advance Breton’s optimistic conception of the unconscious or else adopt Freud’s darker theses, according to which the unconscious is characterized by an essential conservatism.¹⁵ This course of action would be based on the assumption that theories and artworks can be compared with one another on

the same plane, as if it were an essential aspect of an artwork that it support or contradict a particular theory of the unconscious.¹⁶ I do not wish to dispute the value of these comparisons; I also consider it unproductive to extract Ernst's art from the mesh of theory in which it was created, and which has grown increasingly dense as the number of interpretations has increased. I would only seek to loosen this mesh a little in order to put its genesis into view—in order to ask how it came about that Ernst's works became intimately connected with theories of the unconscious. However, the answer I am looking for cannot be found in a history of the influence of theory upon artistic practice. The fact that Ernst himself was a careful and enthusiastic reader of Freud, that unmistakable traces of Freud can be found in his work, that he was an equally attentive reader of surrealist poetry and surrealist mission statements, that his surrealist friends in turn used his works as prompts for their own writing exercises—these and other moments of exchange between pictures, readings, and texts will be brought into account, but they do not form the starting point of my thoughts. Instead, I will begin with artistic practice, in exactly those places where the different procedures that Ernst employed generate effects of the unavailable—where that which has been made changes into something that evades human fabrication and that implies another authority of production.

But what fuels this unconscious production that manifests itself in the use of artistic procedures? The answer I will present in this book is painting—or, more precisely, painting's remains, inasmuch as this art is dismantled by the procedures of the avant-garde and thus transformed into something foreign. Thus, I will begin my study with the thesis that avant-garde procedures developed their own unconscious by destroying painting. What I referred to earlier (somewhat vaguely) as "effects of unavailability" can now be organized into a group of phenomena that all relate to the dismantled components of the painting. These include perspective, which gives each object a position in the represented space and guides the viewer's gaze; the ground upon which the represented figures stand and through which they achieve weight; the picture plane, which seals the painting behind a transparent and fictive boundary; the traditional rectangular format, which makes the picture's outer boundaries inconspicuous; facture, which gives each object its specific materiality; and contour, which distinguishes the objects from one another. Once these elements had been detached from the structure of the painting and thus also distorted, they could become the basis

for resistance to the very procedures that had carried out this detachment and distortion. Ernst's art becomes an art of the unconscious—an art that would be closely connected with the theories of Freud, Breton, and Benjamin—because in it, painting, having come under attack by the avant-garde, continues to exert an influence as a repressed power.

This avenue of approach clearly differs from the attempt to fit Ernst into the canon of modernism, for example, as a precursor to Jackson Pollock. It does no credit to the author of *Beyond Painting* to raise Ernst to the heights of the “great painters,” not only because his paintings cannot sustain such a comparison (and they cannot), but above all because to place Ernst in this company is to overlook the genuine strengths of his art, which as a rule become apparent in small format and through an engagement with literature or with writing as a physical or mechanical activity.¹⁷ Moreover, the paintings of the late 1920s and 1930s should be understood not so much as a return to painting, but as the return of painting—as the ghostly emergence of an art that haunts its own ruins.

The relationship of painting to collage and the readymade can be understood in quite different ways, depending on which artists are being discussed, from which art-historical perspectives. Since Clement Greenberg's classic interpretation of the cubist *papiers collés*, the strongest treatments of these works—by Rosalind Krauss, Christine Poggi, and Yve-Alain Bois—all agree in seeing cubist collage as a reflection on painting.¹⁸ But in contrast to Greenberg, who understands Picasso's and Braque's collages as a detour painting followed in order to get back to itself—only by means of the new technique could the problems unique to painting be solved—Krauss and Bois maintain that Picasso's *papiers collés* form an independent and novel system of representation. This system is no longer based on resemblance, but instead on the use of discrete signs that only acquire meaning through their difference from one another. Meanwhile, Thierry de Duve examines another instance of the transformation of painting in his groundbreaking study on Duchamp's readymades. In these works, he sees an answer to the conflicts—between egalitarianism and aesthetic distinction, the use of synthetic colors and the emphasis on craft—that had beset painting since industrialization and the turn to democracy.

Duchamp's answer was a radical abstraction that pertains to the concept of art or, more specifically, to the negation of the particular art of painting in the general ambition to produce art *tout court*. From then on, art was no longer con-

cerned with the challenges of a particular art form such as painting or sculpture, but instead primarily sought to answer the question of which objects can be designated as art. In an overly simplified summary of his complex deliberations, it could be said that de Duve understands Duchamp's readymade as the sublation of painting—though not in Hegel's sense, since it does not result in a higher form of the conceptualization of art, but in the concept of art being reduced to an empty label.¹⁹ In *The Optical Unconscious*, Rosalind Krauss introduces another perspective on the historical relationship between painting and the readymade and collage. According to Krauss, it was modernist painting and the corresponding ideology of pure seeing that produced its own unconscious by excluding from art all procedures and apparatuses that could endanger the ideal of a spontaneous, self-referential, and self-sufficient seeing. Foremost among these were collage and the readymade: the former because it confronts seeing with a cut, and the latter because it refers seeing to images that are always already given.²⁰

These different attempts to define the relationship of painting to collage and the readymade provide some indication of the larger context in which this book can be understood. Ernst, however, did not lead painting back to itself through collage (as Greenberg thought Picasso and Braque had done); nor did he create an autonomous system of representation that detached itself from its origins in painting (as Bois and Krauss argue with regard to Picasso's *papiers collés*); nor, through the use of readymades, did he arrive at a generalization of the problem of art (as Duchamp did, according to de Duve). In his works made during the Dada years, painting is destroyed, or, rather, it is mortified and preserved as a lifeless depiction of itself. Ernst's surrealism begins with this fossilized painting and revives it as undead. Unlike Duchamp, his art takes a dialectic turn; however, this ghostly dialectic restores painting not on a higher level, but in an underworld in which painting assumes the power of an unconscious authority. And in an exact inversion of the thesis of Krauss's *Optical Unconscious*, it is not collage and the readymade that constitute the unconscious of art; rather, it is painting, which collage and the readymade have repressed.

However, it would be inaccurate to understand Ernst exclusively in the context of the Parisian avant-garde. The mortification and haunting return of painting that is enacted in Ernst's art can only be understood in view of the specific historical conditions of his artistic career. In prewar Germany, when Ernst was attempting to become an artist—not yet the artist who would take a central posi-

tion in the history of avant-gardism, but the young artist adept at expressionism, which was current at the time—German art of the moment was dealing with the challenge posed by French cubism. I would like briefly to introduce two of its reactions. In an art-critical text Paul Klee wrote in 1912 in conjunction with an exhibition of the Swiss artist coalition *Der Moderne Bund* (The Modern Alliance), he included the following reflection on cubism:

In the area of landscape, Cubism has already achieved a connoisseurship, while in the area of the figure, so it seems, it cannot avoid making itself ridiculous. I mention this because I myself have found certain inconsistencies disturbing, but above all in order to explain the justification of its final step, the omission of the object. Pure landscape can in fact tolerate more—and also less: when, for example, one makes changes to the proportions of the things present within it as compared with the dimensions fixed on the retina, first feeling them out and then rethinking so as to simplify them, the result remains a landscape. More rigorous organisms cannot be as tolerant of such re-evaluations. Animals and people, which are actually there in order to live, lose more of their capacity for life with each conversion. The situation is even worse when they must be integrated into a heterogeneous pictorial organism or—as with Picasso—having been cut into separate motifs, must be placed wherever the pictorial idea requires. Destruction for construction's sake? Indifference to the object and, at the same time, promotion of the object through its crass mistreatment?²¹

Let us summarize Klee's argument one more time. Cubism was only able to represent that to which human beings had already given form: objects and landscapes. Living creatures, however, are not artifacts but "more rigorous organisms" and thus are excluded from an art that through dissection—wherever "the pictorial idea requires"—places its own being as artifact at the center. In order not to fall prey to the pure technicity of painting, Klee recommends in the next paragraph the abstract painting of Robert Delaunay, which, instead of subjecting the life of animals and people to its own artistic devices, pursues a genuine "plastic life."²² Hans Arp, who was represented in the exhibition of *Der Moderne Bund*, would follow in this direction and would trace the becoming of nature in blots and lines, as I will discuss in chapter 1.

A second example of this reaction formation against cubism can be found in

two texts written by Walter Benjamin in 1917, “Painting and the Graphic Arts” (“Malerei und Graphik”) and “Painting, or Signs and Marks” (“Über die Malerei oder Zeichen und Mal”), both of which came out of a discussion with Gershom Scholem about the nature of cubism.²³ These two sketches were first published in the 1970s in the framework of Benjamin’s collected writings and were certainly not known to Ernst. However, because Benjamin would write a fascinating commentary on Ernst nine years later, his answer to cubism is of great interest to us. These short texts, the historical importance of which was first pointed out by Yve-Alain Bois,²⁴ can be reduced to two theses: that painting differs from graphic works (in this context, primarily prints and drawings) on the grounds of orientation and the form of production. For example, a drawing or print is horizontal and emphasizes its being as artifact—so clearly that each line is experienced as a placed line, and each between-space as paper. As soon as the lines suggest the horizon and the between-space suggests the sky or sea—thus, as soon as they take on a representational function—then, according to Benjamin, the nature of a graphic work is no longer respected. A graphic work is an artifact made from lines and their underlay. By contrast, painting is oriented vertically and as a stained surface is analogous to the human body, in that an area of paint is like a mark—a birthmark, a skin disease, or a blush—which has risen from the depths of the body to its surface.²⁵ Benjamin’s theses present an answer to cubism since they were written in reaction to Scholem’s conception that cubism is a mathematical art that concedes only a decorative function to color. Against this distinction between the being of law and the semblance of material, Benjamin poses another distinction: namely, the distinction between artifact and bodily symptom, between images that have been fabricated and those that appear spontaneously. Pure technicity is the province of the graphic work; however, according to Benjamin, painting after cubism could return to a mimesis of those marks that manifest spontaneously on the human body.

Klee’s and Benjamin’s answers to cubism, while specific to the artist and the author, are also indicative of a general pattern in the reception of contemporary painting in Germany in the pre- and postwar years. Cubism was welcomed as an assault on illusionism, but it also caused distress because it was thought of as the reduction of painting to sheer fabrication, since the hope that attended the surmounting of illusionism was specifically that semblance would be replaced by an originary mimesis. This was understood as a form of imitation that consists

not in representation and thus distancing, but in the re-creation of the originary authority of production, which was located partly in nature, partly in life, and partly in the human body. The difficulty, so central for the modern aesthetic, of mediating between the artwork as artifact and the artwork as the realizing of an unconscious production had already been aggravated. Before collage and the readymade led to the fundamental transformation of the visual arts in Dada and surrealism, painting itself had raised the question of whether it could be related to life, nature, and the body—or, in more general terms, to an unconscious production, and thus could be considered not entirely subject to its own devices. In Germany, an influential answer to the provocation of cubism was the turn to the idea of an originary mimesis.

Ernst's position in this history can only be understood, however, if one takes into account an interruption—the First World War—that was definitive and horrifying for a whole generation. Ernst came home from four years at war and soon afterward, as a Dadaist, began insisting on the impossibility of such a homecoming. For him, there was also no going back to the originary mimesis that had preoccupied Klee and Benjamin, as well as Ernst's friend Hans Arp, before and during the war. This ideal of a painting in which nature, life, or the body expressed itself directly instead became the polemic target of his Dadaism, but it continued to have a subliminal effect. In a manner of speaking, it entered into a fossil state and ultimately, in his surrealism, achieved a ghostly afterlife. In summary, painting formed the unconscious of Ernst's surrealism, albeit under particular historical conditions: after its reduction to technique in cubism; after its re-creation as originary mimesis in the works of Klee, Delaunay, Benjamin, and Arp; and after the destruction of this type of painting by Ernst's own Dadaism. Only after these transformations did painting enter the very position, in surrealism, that previously had been occupied by nature or life: it became the source of a spontaneous, unconscious production.

Chapter 1 is devoted to this history of painting. From there, I will show how Max Ernst's art is connected to various theories of the unconscious—surrealist automatism (chapter 2), Freud's psychoanalysis (chapter 3), and the idea that modern history is a process that can be understood as analogous to psychic trauma (chapter 4). I will be interested not only in the analogies between artistic procedures and unconscious processes, but also and to the same extent in the

“disanalogies,” for example, between Freud’s mystic writing pad and Ernst’s overpaintings or frottages.²⁶ In the final in-depth interpretation of a painting, *Europe after the Rain* from 1933 (chapter 5), I will pursue the idea that, under the particular political circumstances of 1933, Ernst sought an alternative to painting’s ghostly return, and that he found it in a cartographic painting. A look at Benjamin’s reading of Ernst (afterword) will conclude the book. The purpose of this conclusion is not to uncover in Benjamin a key to the artist’s works, but to elucidate once more how art, when taken as the starting point, puts theoretical reflections on art into a new perspective.

FROM DADA
TO SURREALISM
THE GHOST STORY
OF MIMESIS

WHERE PAINTING WAS: BRÜHL, 1909

On a summer day in Brühl, during what he would remember two world wars later as his carefree and high-spirited youth,¹ Max Ernst posed at his easel (fig. 1), which he had set up in a tree-lined lane that can be seen in the painting and the photograph's background. The way the young Ernst holds his neck awkwardly forward, away from his stiff collar—as though he were not outside in nature, but instead were being made to stick his head through the hole in a carnival cutout—brings to mind the Dadaist who would title one of his best-known collages *The Hat Makes the Man* (*C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme*).² By the spring of 1910, Ernst would parody the photo in the magazine of his graduating class, *Life at Our School* (*Aus dem Leben an der Penne*), by drawing himself in a similar pose, though as a bust, holding a gigantic palette. The caption cites Wilhelm Busch: "A young man with a hopeful heart takes quickly to the painter's art."³ In a school magazine like this one, parody is surely an affirmative practice, since it is precisely the students' most cherished aspirations that are singled out for teasing. In the photograph from 1909, Ernst had in fact adopted the artist's pose suitable for a young painter *en plein air*. The pose emphasizes his distinctive artist's gaze and thus the mode of painting that the picture on the easel exemplifies: an impressionism already past its prime. As is well known, impressionism's fundamental tenets assert the mutuality of hand and eye. The individual act of seeing corresponds to the equally individual act of painting; artistic authenticity originates in the density, darkness, and idiosyncrasy of the body, which are expressed equally in the artist's hand and eye; and, finally, visual stimulus and tactile brushstroke—the trace of the world and the trace of art—become coextensive on the surface of the painting.⁴

Consequently, a painting like the one resting on the young Ernst's easel was more than a successful illusion of fleeting nature. It could also be read as an

FIGURE 1
Max Ernst as
a painter, ca.
1909.



imitation of the process of perception, equivalent to the traces that nature leaves on the retina. Thus, it was a “mimesis” of nature that drew on perception theory to make current the ancient double meaning of the term: here “mimesis” means both the illusionistic simulation of phenomena as well as the active re-creation of forces operating within them—it relates to both the products and the processes of nature. Modernism’s art theory famously brings this double meaning into play whenever depiction or illusion is dismissed as extrinsic, while performative imitation is reclaimed for modern art as a deeper, more intrinsic relationship to nature.⁵ Within the modernist understanding of history, impressionist painting marks the last possible mediation. It depicts the phenomenal world as a fleeting apparition and simultaneously imitates it, inasmuch as “imitating nature” can also be understood as the subject’s reflexive activity in aspiring to imitate the process by which nature is visually perceived.

Since this double meaning of mimesis plays an important role in what follows, I propose making a simple terminological distinction: I will use “illusionism” to refer to mimesis (or imitation in the broader sense) that takes phenomenal nature for its object; whereas I will use “imitation” in the narrower sense to mean a type of mimesis that aims for the active re-creation of a nature that, however it is understood, precedes phenomena. When mimesis is no longer taken seriously and is repeated with mocking unbelief, I call this parody “mimetism (of the second order),” following Gérard Genette.⁶ This parody targets illusionism as well as imitation, most often both.

The theorem of the living unity of illusion and imitation of nature in impressionist painting can be found in the photograph’s constellation of motifs in a threefold transfer between eye and hand: first, from the seen (and photographed) section of nature to the painted one; second, from the palette to the canvas; and third, from the artist’s gaze to the artist’s hand. The isomorphism between the trace of light on the retina and the trace of paint on the canvas is supposed to attest to each of these three turns. But it is not necessary to relate the motifs to one another in the organic movement of a spiral. The photograph can just as well be dissected with a gaze trained in avant-garde painting critique—with the gaze of Dadamax, who was responsible for the collage *The Hat Makes the Man*. Then we don’t see a spiral movement anymore, but isolated elements engaged in a play of doubling—photograph and oil painting, oil painting and palette, eye and hand. When the pose becomes rigid, when nature turns into a backdrop and the shirt

collar stiffens, then the mediation between illusion and imitation, between visual perception and its re-creation by the artist's hand, also ceases to function.⁷

The art-historical caesura between the impressionist unity of mimesis and its Dadaist disintegration into a play of doubling is described in what follows as a multiply delayed occurrence. It happens not as a smooth cut, but in many separate ruptures, followed by seismic shifts, which make visible how mimesis was stratified and how its return was prepared. In this phenomenon of the return by which the mimetic is brought back to the art of the avant-garde, three moments can be distinguished: First, the two aspects of mimesis—illusion and imitation—are exposed to various attacks, for though illusionism had already been discredited by prewar modern art, imitation of a deeper force (such as nature or life) was still a strong ideal and, therefore, a valid object of Dadaist critique. Second, the processes of anti-mimesis are combined with mimetic residue. And third, the 1920s bring the return to a mimesis that is eerily alive. While Ernst's Dadaist works preserve a mimetic residue in an essentially mortified state, his surrealism posits mortification in order to discover in it a ghostly afterlife—a simulacrum of the simultaneously illusory and imitative mimesis whose living unity the young Rhineland painter had hoped to discover on his excursions into the countryside. The following attempt to describe the history of Ernst's artistic practice along the thread of its mimetic play can therefore be summarized as follows: Where painting was—painting as a sensory plenitude of the visual and tactile, simultaneously imitation and illusion—Dada and surrealism would come to be: Dada as painting's mortification and surrealism as its haunting return.

MAX ERNST AND HANS ARP; OR, BREAKING DOWN THE BLOT

Let's take the photograph further. Imagine that, sometime between 1919 and 1921, while working together on *Bulletin D*, *Die Schammade*, or the *FATAGAGA* pictures, Max Ernst and Hans Arp came across the prewar photograph, taken three years before the friends first met, and ten years before they met again under the auspices of Dada.⁸ The play of doubling that separates the oil painting from its subject and the posing artist from surrounding nature would probably have seemed to Arp like an allegory of the kind of vanity that, according to him, was the characteristic fault of illusionistic art. In those same prewar years, he himself had begun the search for a new form of nature study, which he intended

to be conceived as a radical turning away from visual illusion and a regaining of an originary re-creation of nature: “I gave myself to the study of nature, lay motionless on a table for unutterably long periods, and attempted to dream like a mountain, slowly, deeply and endlessly slowly.”⁹ From Arp’s self-experiment, it becomes quite clear that mimesis as imitation aims to produce a structural analogy to what is being imitated: the analogy between the unutterably long, motionless repose of the mountain and the sleep of the artist. Second, imitation achieves this analogy less in the product than in the process. Imitation is performative—the artist plays the mountain in *actu*, in the rise and fall of his breath, in the coming into being and passing away of his dreams. There is also a third related characteristic of imitation as Arp understands it: imitation and organicity condition each other. In the case of the mountain, this means that imitation results in bringing what is imitated to life. The structural analogy between nature and art, the performative enactment of this analogy in artwork, and the resultant bringing to life are the three aspects encompassed in Arp’s dream of the ideal imitation of nature.

In Arp’s ink drawings, made in the Dada years from 1916 to 1921,¹⁰ the illusion of nature dissolves into dark blots and light intervening spaces. Indeterminate suggestions of the figural—possible proto-forms of future mountains, forests, or mythic creatures—are encased like decomposing fossils (fig. 2). The amorphous facture—which is not like handwriting but instead appears distinctly anonymous, accidental, and thus quasi-natural—invites the viewer to an imaginative seeing of resemblances. This type of seeing does not aim to contour stable figures, so much as to suffuse the dark blots and white spaces with life, to induce in them the germination of possible images.¹¹

Arp dreamed of a primordial mimesis that does not yet know the play of doubling of photograph and oil painting, oil painting and palette, hand and eye. He wished for a nature that neither makes itself available nor allows for reinvention,¹² since it is always present and effective as an originary totality. The one who imitates this nature by dreaming with the mountain and seeing with the accidental blot trusts in a maternal whole that expresses itself even in dead forms. An allegory of this desire for a universal suffusion with life can be read in the story that Arp told in which he discovered the biomorphic forms that would be the basis for his ink drawings. The setting is the shore of Lago Maggiore, at the foot of Monte Verità. “In Ascona, with ink and brush I drew broken branches, roots, grasses,

FIGURE 2

Hans Arp, *Untitled*, 1917. 18 × 22 cm.
Kupferstichkabinett, Öffentliche
Kunstsammlung, Basel. © 2012 Artists
Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG
Bild-Kunst, Bonn.



and stones, which the lake had washed onto the shore. I simplified these forms and unified their essence in animate ovals, emblems of the eternal transformation and becoming of the body.”¹³ Specifically, “broken branches, roots, grasses, and stones” become models for a drawing activity that aims to create “emblems of eternal transformation.” Where the waves wash inanimate or lifeless things onto shore, Arp finds elements for a primordial generation of the organic from nature’s broken and discarded remains—and this also means a primordial generation of animate forms from dried ink and paper.

Ernst admired the Dada veteran who in 1914, instead of lining up with the so-called “August volunteers,” fled on the last train to exile in Switzerland. However, unlike Arp, Ernst did not want to escape the play of doubling. After four long years in the field artillery, where his job was to read landscapes with

diagrams in order to give coordinates to the gunner, he was no longer able to believe in a natural, originary art. A portrait of a friendship, homage to Arp's dream and at the same time the destructive analysis of it, *Arp Microgram 1:25,000* (*Microgramme Arp 1:25.000*) (fig. 3) demonstrates the difference between the two artists. The title specifies the perspective: what we see are samples of Arp's microstructure, six different samples of a thousandth of a gram of Arp, magnified by a factor of 25,000. And what do they show, these minimal samples magnified to the extreme? Crustaceans and fossil fishes, mountain ranges and cross-sections of the earth's interior.

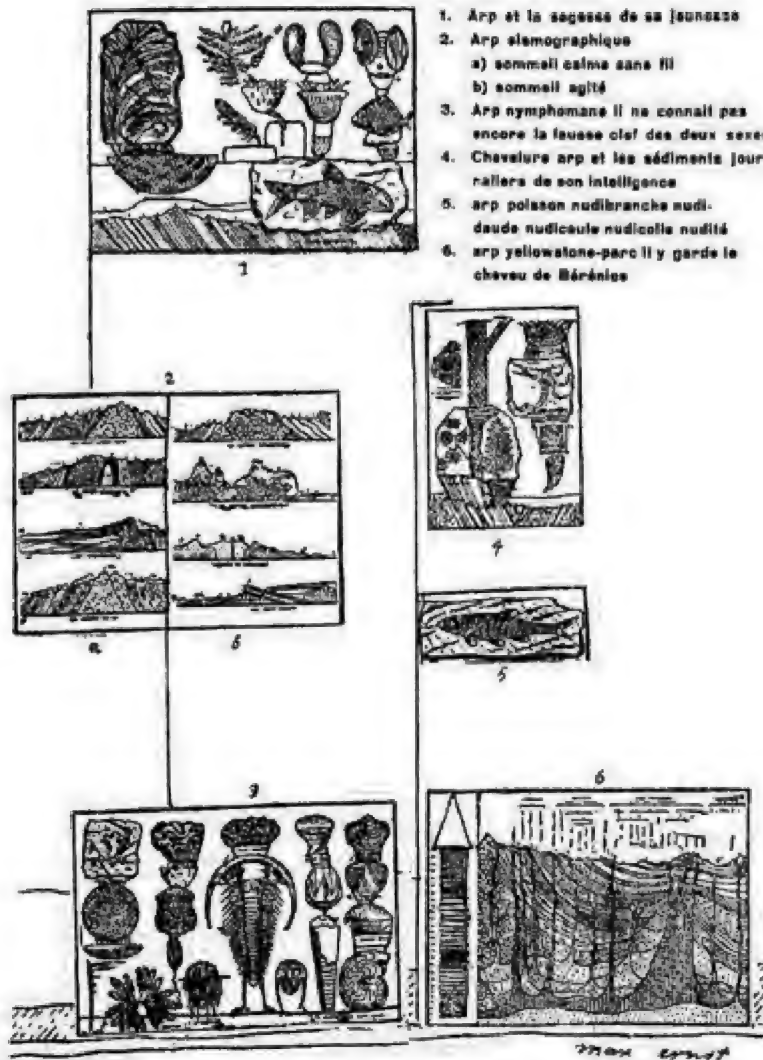
The accompanying legend suggests that the diagram could possibly be deciphered. The circle of friends comprising Paris Dada—who published the magazine *Littérature*, in which the diagram first appeared in 1921—liked to organize social games such as questionnaires and ranked lists, and at the same time understood the secret as a power around which a society could form. Ernst used the crypto-portrait to introduce his friend, and simultaneously his own poetics, to this specific readership.¹⁴

For picture 1 of *Arp Microgram*, the legend reads: “Arp et la sagesse de sa jeunesse” (Arp and the wisdom of his youth). The fossil specimens—ferns, fish, crustaceans—presented on beveled stone slabs are like the trophies of Arp's youthful wisdom. His youth encompasses the youth of the earth, a prehuman prehistory that comes into expression in the artist. This romantic topos of the past as an impenetrable prior age to which only a certain few can give us access—among them psychoanalysts, poets, neurotics, and dreamers—points to Freud. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (a book that Ernst made heavy use of), Freud writes, “This profound and eternal character of humanity, upon the touching of which in his listeners the poet normally calculates, is made up of the stirrings of the spirit which are rooted in childhood, in the period which later becomes prehistoric.”¹⁵ The famous parallelism of ontogeny and phylogeny—which dominated scientific thinking around 1900 through the enormous impact of Ernst Haeckel and which was also recognized by Freud as a precondition of psychoanalysis—thus forms the code that underlies the pictures and their captions in *Arp Microgram*. Prehistory can be taken to imply childhood.

Picture 2 illustrates how this primordial past continues to have an effect in the present: in sleep, which revives human prehistory again each night. The legend

FIGURE 3
 Max Ernst,
Arp Microgram
 1:25,000
 (*Microgramme*
Arp 1:25.000).
 From
Littérature 3
 (May 1921).
 22.2 × 13.8
 cm, collage
 and ink
 (Spies and
 Metken, *Max*
Ernst: Œuvre-
Katalog, no.
 408 [hereafter
 "S/M"]).

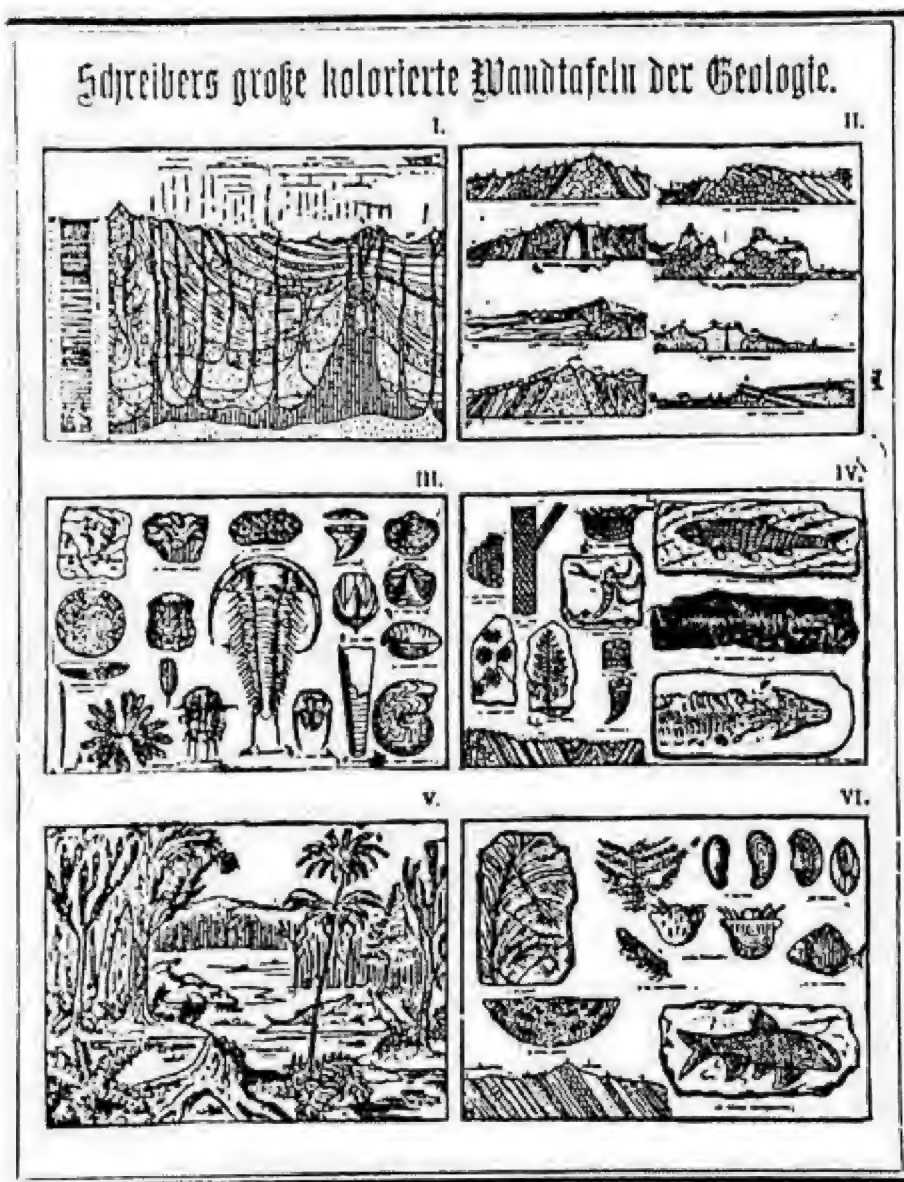
Microgramme Arp 1 : 25.000



reads: “Arp sismographique a) sommeil calme sans fil b) sommeil agité” (Seismographic Arp a) calm, wireless sleep b) agitated sleep). Depending on whether his sleep is “wireless,” connecting him with a peaceful dream realm, or whether he is badly shaken by nocturnal apparitions, Arp is either like a range of steep fold mountains, or like an already heavily eroded landscape of hills. Fossil specimen (picture 1) and dream (picture 2) lead back to a primordial history governed (according to Freud’s *Three Essays*) by a polymorphously perverse sexuality, in which, according to the caption for the third picture, the “false key of the two sexes” is still unknown. Thus, in this picture, the combinatorics that joins various crustaceans into figures might stand for the polymorphousness of infantile desire, which likewise knows no single object.

Picture 4—“Chevelure arp et les sédiments journaliers de son intelligence” (Arp hair and the everyday deposits of his intelligence)—plays on the evident formal similarity between Arp’s hairdo and a crustacean: the artist’s mental work is a geologic process that preserves the living nature (fern leaves, small sea creatures) of a prehuman epoch. The fossil fish in picture 5 documents Arp in a state of total nakedness, as a fish out of water. As opposed to this skeptical cameo, picture 6 can be interpreted as the natural-philosophical apotheosis of the artist whose creative medium is the primordial time of his infancy. The caption for this picture reads: “Arp yellowstone-parc il y garde le cheveu de Bérénice” (Yellowstone Park Arp he keeps Berenice’s hair there). Inside the earth, in geological cross-section lines, Ernst discovers the resemblance to a woman’s hair and identifies this hair with the constellation Coma Berenices. The heavens are reflected in the depths of the earth; nature becomes visible as replete with correspondences. Arp, as his friend Ernst represents him, embodies this romantic nature—he is its conservation area, its Yellowstone Park, where the desire for resemblances can survive unimpeded, and where nature in its whole array, from tiniest to most gigantic, is filled with images. Here, Ernst could well be citing Freud, who compared the survival of the pleasure principle after the victory of the reality principle to the establishment of national parks after industrialization: “In the same way, a nation whose wealth rests on the exploitation of the produce of its soil will yet set aside certain areas for reservation in their original state and for protection from the changes brought about by civilization (e.g., Yellowstone Park).”¹⁶

FIGURE 4
 From *Cologne
 Catalogue of
 Teaching Aids*
 (*Katalog der
 Kölner Lehr-
 mittelanstalt*),
 1914, p. 195.



In this first, purely iconographic reading, Ernst's portrait appears as an encrypted homage to Arp's ideal of the natural origin of artworks. The earth imagines, generates various types of images (from impressions to diagrams), and projects them from its own depths out among the stars. But what the iconography of this work celebrates, it simultaneously destroys—with the crucial assistance of pictorial form.

The source material, taken from the *Cologne Catalogue of Teaching Aids* (fig. 4),¹⁷ exemplifies specific conventions for the representation of nature, among them the diagram. Ernst accentuates what is already present in the geology illustrations, which caught his avant-gardist's eye because they make nature available in many different forms of representation and therefore make it possible to assemble nature in arbitrary relationships. Does picture 1 relate to picture 2a as picture 3 relates to picture 2b? Or do 4 and 5 add up to 6? Are 1 and 3, or 4 and 6, findings from 2 or 5? There seems to be no doubt that in *Arp Microgram*, Ernst does what a reader of avant-garde theories would expect from a Dadaist: he summarily destroys organic imitation. The mountain that Arp wanted to bring to life through imitation is represented as having been cut into, dismantled, and measured—in source images that refer to the conventions for representing nature and their mortifying consequences, and in a pictorial form that excludes the concept of art's unmediated natural origin. Because of its proximity to writing, the pictorial form of the diagram accentuates the conventionality and mediatedness of iconic signs.¹⁸

One noteworthy detail remains to be mentioned. If we look at the diagrammatic connecting lines in *Arp Microgram* more closely, we observe that all of them can still be recognized as additions drawn in by hand with a pen. The lines get thicker, are drawn over, break off abruptly, miss their target. At the picture's lower edge, they burst into a new representational form: they are no longer diagrammatic lines producing legible connections, but iconic lines representing geologic layering. It seems as if the materiality of the construction lines—or their retouched quality, in which the heaviness of the hand manifests itself—has solidified into a rock substratum. The diagram is now presented in a double fashion: first, before a neutral ground, which is relevant in its sheer difference from the black markings; and second, upon a naturalistic platform, as if the diagram could also be read as a pair of figures. Obviously, it does not condense into a heavy

and material pair of figures, but the concretization of the diagram lines into rock layers that serve as a base for the diagram can be read as a distant memory of the ground plane in an illusionistic depiction.

The difference between the small pictures and the frame of their presentation becomes permeable, both because the diagram is standing on a similar surface as the fossil specimens in picture 1, and also because several of the small pictures also show diagrams. These are natural diagrams—the layers of rock inscribed inside the earth. If the natural world depicts itself diagrammatically in its geologic layers, then, conversely, diagrammatic lines on a neutral ground can take on natural characteristics and be materialized as a physical ground.

Where are these detailed observations headed? The assumption that Ernst destroys the imitation of nature in this diagram stands to be corrected, because with this destruction, the sovereignty of construction also becomes negotiable. Construction is surrounded by a self-authorizing, unavailable nature, which intrudes in the places where the diagram lines are discontinuous and thickened, in the touch-ups and flaws, that is, in the graphic parapraxes (Freudian slips).¹⁹ The destruction of the organic artwork, as the organic artwork was imagined by Arp, seems to bring to power an inorganic nature, which is associated with the destructive pictorial form of the diagram at the same time as it surrounds this form. There are two possible readings, depending on whether (1) illusionism or (2) imitation is selected as the target of this parodic mimetism.

First, if it is emphasized that the diagram receives a ground plane in order to evoke an unstable memory of a pair of figures standing upright, then the diagram is related to the history of the crisis of illusionism, inasmuch as this history is particularly clearly expressed near the picture's lower edge. As has often been demonstrated (by Steinberg, Shiff, Krauss, and Pichler, among others), the picture's lower edge is a critical zone where the dissociation of the illusionistic picture begins, because in the pictorial fiction, the platform for the represented objects—and thus the pictorial element that functions as a minimal condition for heaviness, material density, and location—corresponds to the picture's lower edge. When the platform tips, drops away vertically, or gives way to an unfathomable void beyond the picture's lower edge (as in Cézanne or Picasso, or already in Goya), these are symptoms of the collapse of the illusionistic picture.²⁰ This process is not brought to a definitive conclusion with Dada, nor does it come to rest there. Ernst plays with the illusionistic picture's isolated remains by taking

the diagram—a pictorial form that is oriented vertically but without implying sensory qualities such as heaviness and material density—and giving it a plat-form, as only a heavy figure requires.

Second, inasmuch as geologic layers can be understood as a diagram, the other meaning of mimesis also comes into play—not the illusionistic depiction, but the performative imitation of nature. This imitation is likewise the target of parodic mimetism. What was characteristic for mimesis as imitation, a structural analogy between nature and artistic procedure, can also be observed in Arp *Microgram 1:25,000*—the diagram lines are modeled by the layers of the earth's interior; the diagrammatic quality of nature is imitated in the diagram. However, just as the ground plane does not restore the effective qualities of an illusionistic picture (heaviness, materiality, location with a depth of field), these analogies between the diagram and the earth's layers also do not lead to a revival of a living imitation of nature. It seems that these analogies only appear as an after-effect (through retouching) in the picture's flaws—the halting, inexact, material diagram lines that materialize into rock strata. It is in these remnants of production, these parapraxes of art, that the diagrammatic distancing of nature is punctuated, in order to cultivate a secondary mimetism between artistic procedure and natural process.

In summary, in the ground beneath the diagram, two separate aspects of mimesis come into contact: illusion, on the one hand, and imitation, on the other. When looking at the portrait photograph of the young late impressionist, a critical gaze can already dissect the unity in impressionism and perceive this unity as a play of doubling. Arp attempted to put an end to this play by banning illusionism and devoting art to the imitation of nature—where “imitation” is understood as the nature-reenacting animation of an ink blot and paper. Ernst had a radically different objective. In his portrait of Arp, the anti-mimetic pictorial form of the diagram effaces both illusionism and imitation. Details added after the fact to the picture's lower edge are the only residues of the old pictorial order, fossils of illusionism and stratifications of the imitation of nature, which are preserved as anachronisms in the diagram.

These are wide-ranging thoughts on an occasional piece that Ernst used to introduce himself and his friend Arp to the French Dadaists. It is high time to justify this effort by demonstrating that the distorted preservation of mimetic remains is characteristic of Ernst's Dadaist work as a whole.

PETRIFIED ILLUSIONISM

In Max Ernst's Dadaist work, many kinds of diagrams can be found: constellations, graduated scales, roulette tables, perspective schemes, and geologic cross-sections, as well as numerous machine drawings of armored vehicles, bicycles, and mechanically animated letters of the alphabet. His interest in the machine works of the avant-garde began when he discovered Francis Picabia's *Alarm Clock* (*Réveil matin*) in the *Anthologie Dada*, published by the Zurich Dadaists (fig. 5).²¹ The print of a dismantled alarm clock reveals none of the commodity fetishism that Picabia, an auto enthusiast, had glorified in the early bachelor machines from his time in New York (e.g., *Girl Born without a Mother* [*Fille née sans mère*], *Here She Is* [*Voilà elle*], or *American Woman* [*Américaine*]).²² Instead, *Alarm Clock*, which Picabia presented to the European Dadas after his arrival in Zurich, is these works' ruin. Hans Arp remembers:

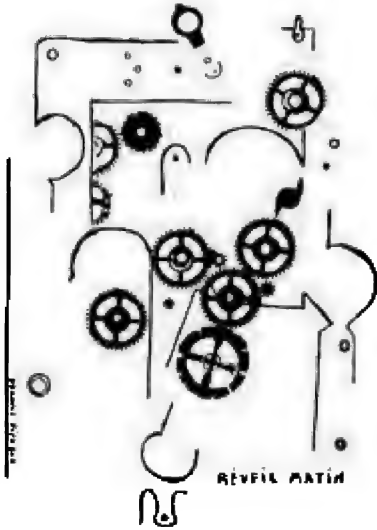
I met Francis Picabia during his visit to Zurich. He came as the emissary of the American Dadaists to extend greetings to his colleagues in Zurich. Curious and touched, Tristan Tzara and I went to his hotel. We found him busily dissecting an alarm clock. I couldn't help but think of Rembrandt's *Anatomy* in the art museum in Amsterdam. Truly, we had made a great leap forward into the realm of abstraction. Showing no mercy, he dismantled his alarm clock down to the mainspring, which he extracted in triumph. For a brief moment he interrupted his work in order to greet us. But without wasting too much time, he adorned a white sheet of paper with impressions of the little gear wheels, springs, hands, and other secret tiny parts of the clock. Like a dutiful postman, he zealously applied these things to the stamp pad and then to the paper, and connected the stamps to one another with lines. . . .²³

Arp's supposedly unbidden recollection of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Joan Deyman* suggests that Picabia's *Alarm Clock* should be understood as a parody of illusionistic painting. The picture's object does not appear upon an illusionistic platform; instead, a material relation connects it to its underlay,²⁴ the paper ground, which serves as a work surface and is stamped by Picabia. Heaviness and materiality, instead of being qualities of the represented objects, are transformed into the means of production. Picabia comments on this breaking down of illusionistic representation into literal production through his signature. In

DADA 4-5

FIGURE 5

Francis Picabia, *Alarm Clock (Réveil matin)*,
from *Anthologie Dada 4-5* (1919).



illusionism, the picture's lower edge is the correlative of the platform on which objects are placed, and simultaneously it is the site of the signature. Picabia has rotated his signature to the left, into the vertical, as if not only his alarm clock but also the pictorial field had been dismantled on a horizontal work surface. On this surface, among other remains, there lies a remnant of the destroyed illusionistic easel painting: its dismantled bottom edge, with signature.

Picabia's parodic reflection on the image consists in that the machine diagram, by destroying itself, also recalls the destruction of the illusionistic picture and uses its remains as decoration. Ernst takes this reflexive negation as his starting point, but lends it a more complicated form, inasmuch as he employs iconic elements and generates new iconic motifs in unexpected places. Regarding iconic elements, instead of using objects (such as the components of an alarm clock), Ernst

uses images from commercial intaglio plates (bicycles, roulette tables, various mechanisms).²⁵ Regarding the generation of new iconic motifs, these new motifs arise precisely at the sites of error in the printing process and are predominantly geological. While Picabia dismantles the mechanism (of the alarm clock) because he does not want to represent a heavy object but wants to use the heaviness and materiality of its individual parts as a means of production for a direct imprint, Ernst turns away from this procedural literalism. Ernst also uses imprinting methods through which materiality and heaviness are literally expressed, particularly through extraneous ink traces and errors of the printing process. However, these traces and errors are immediately translated into pictorial motifs—most often geological ones, the densest and most materially weighted of all.

In *Farewell My Beautiful Land of Marie Laurencin* (*Adieu mon beau pays de Marie Laurencin*; fig. 6), Ernst retouched the extraneous ink traces to form a stony cladding that surrounds the war machine and paralyzes its inner workings. In the same year, 1919, he made *Portable Handbook* (*Vademecum mobile, ihr seid gewarnt*) and *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas* (*La canalisation de gaz frigorifié*; figs. 7, 8), also using commercial intaglio plates. In contrast to the petrified war machine, these carry off a triumph of mobility: through rotation, doubling, shifting, reflection, and optical illusion; roulettes, bicycles, constellations, and transmission belts. Mechanically reproducible production methods such as imprinting, as well as rotation, refer to Marcel Duchamp's first readymade, *Bicycle Wheel* (fig. 9). In *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas*, the bicycle wheel is placed at the center of the picture as a quotation.²⁶ But why does Ernst make *Bicycle Wheel* into a ruin, when *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas* itself affirms the poetics of the readymade, that is, its mechanization, mobility, and repetition? The answer can again be found at the pictures' edges. In both *Portable Handbook* and *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas*, the edges seem to have been trimmed away carelessly, resulting in forms that suit the aged, stained, and torn condition of the paper. A formal association can be made to the irregular ovals of Arp's ink drawings (fig. 2). At their edgeless outer limits, the traditional pictorial field seems to melt away or erode. In Ernst's two works, the traditional pictorial field is also destroyed by wear and tear: the picture's boundaries follow a line as careless and accidental as if the picture had taken shape under the influence of undirected forces. These de-organicizing natural forces, which in Arp *Microgram* and the machine drawings surround the diagram's form, here work their effects on the diagram's support—one could

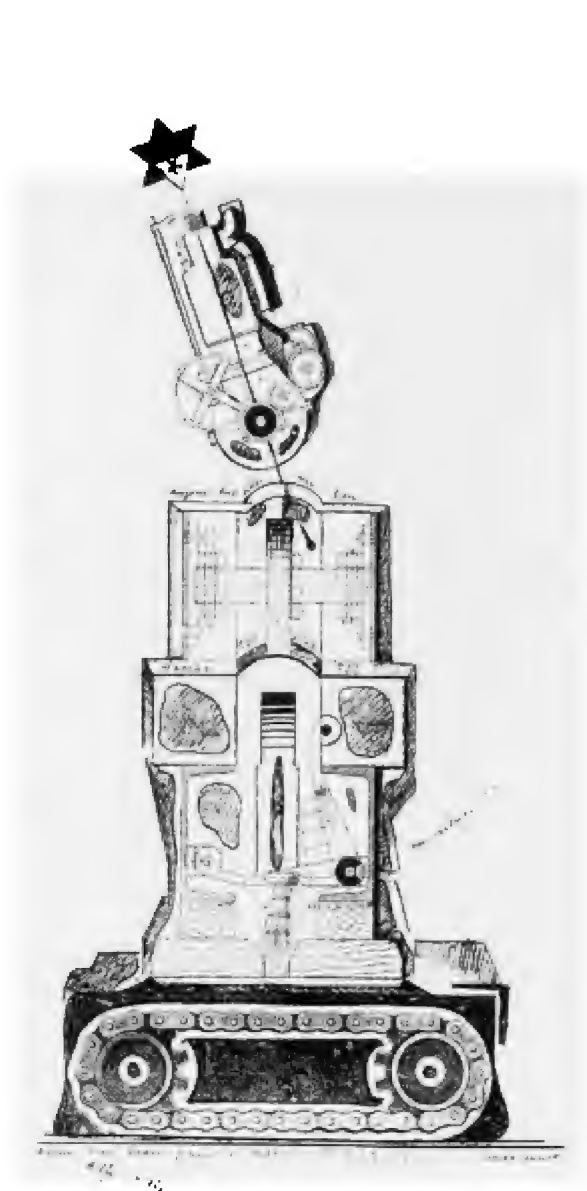
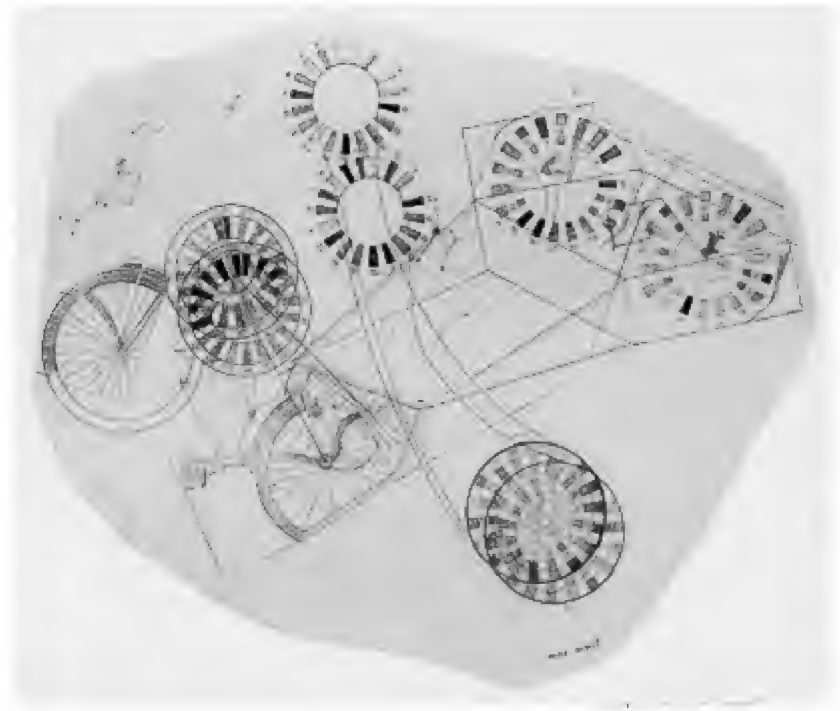


FIGURE 6
Max Ernst,
*Farewell My
Beautiful
Land of Marie
Laurencin
(adieu mon
beau pays
de Marie
Laurencin)*,
1919. 40 ×
28 cm, line
engraving
with pen and
ink on paper.
New York,
Museum of
Modern Art
(S/M no.
313). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

FIGURE 7
 Max Ernst,
*Portable
 Handbook
 (Vademecum
 mobile, ihr
 seid gewarnt)*,
 1919/20. 41.5
 × 53 cm, line
 engraving
 with pen, ink,
 aquarelle, and
 gouache on
 newsprint.
 Private
 collection
 (S/M no.
 326). © 2012
 Artists Rights
 Society (ARS),
 New York /
 ADAGP, Paris.



say they expose it to erosion and transform it into a ruin such as the *Bicycle Wheel* at the center of the picture.

In *Arp Microgram* (fig. 3), the lines of the diagram, because of their irregularity and materiality, solidify into rock strata. In the war machine (fig. 6), retouchings made after the fact, building on the flaws in the imprint, surround the motif in a stony cladding. And likewise, in *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas* (fig. 8), it is through small flaws in the printing process that stony nature intrudes into the diagrammatic order. In the areas around the roulette circles, traces of ink can be seen: these deposits enclose the figures of rotation in the same way that the entire construction is contained by the eroded picture format. In all three pictures, traces of production technology can be read as parapraxes, moments at which the diagrammatic pictorial order breaks down and residues of heaviness and materiality accumulate. These residues adorn both the boundaries of the figure (armored vehicles, wheels, etc.) and the boundaries of the picture, considered either as the format (in *Portable Handbook* and *The Canalization of Refrigerated Gas*)

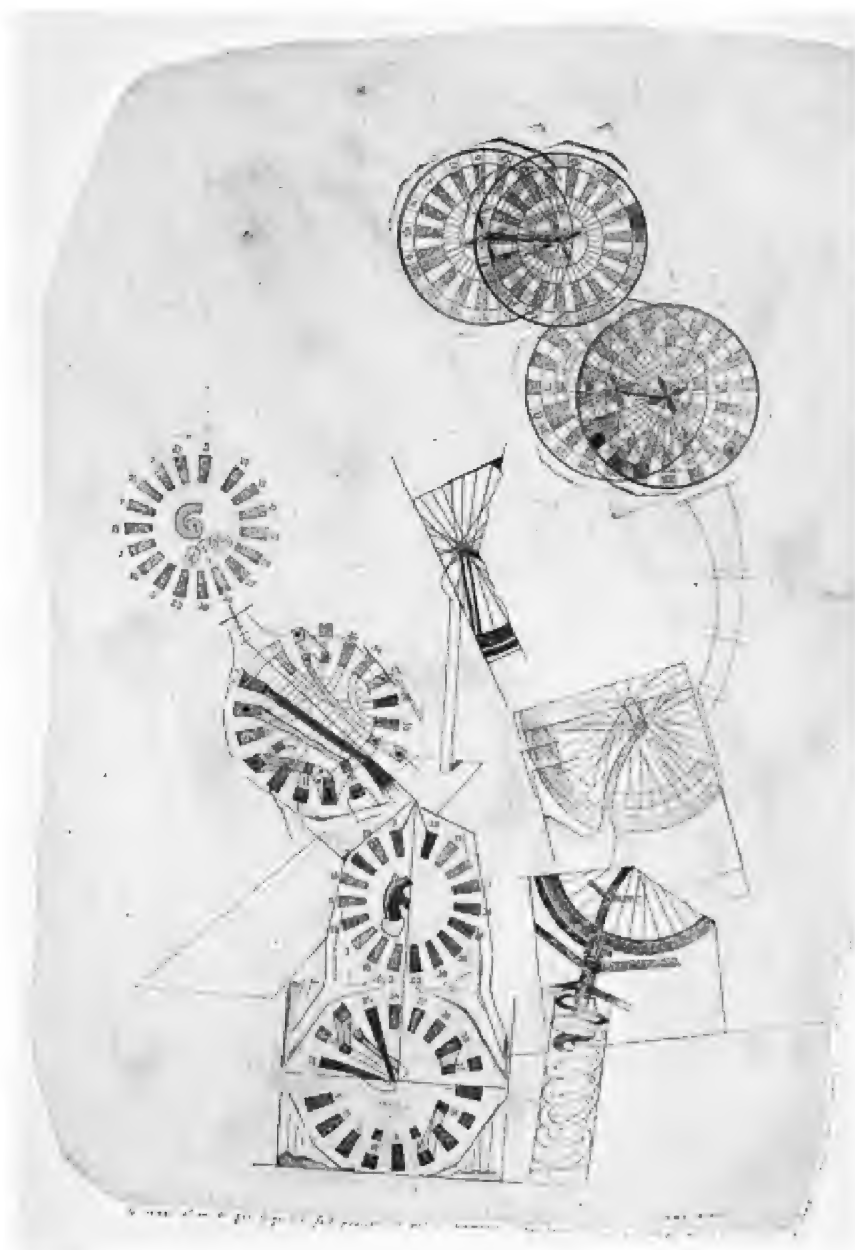


FIGURE 8
 Max
 Ernst, *The
 Canalization
 of Refrigerated
 Gas* (*la
 canalisation de
 gaz frigorifié*),
 1919/20. 54
 × 38 cm, line
 engraving
 with pen, ink,
 aquarelle, and
 gouache on
 paper. Private
 collection
 (S/M no.
 325). © 2012
 Artists Rights
 Society (ARS),
 New York /
 ADAGP, Paris.

FIGURE 9

Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*, 1951. Replica of lost 1913 original. Height 125 cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.



or the ground plane (in *Arp Microgram*). That is, these residues of illusionism appear in the critical zones where the decomposition of illusionism is most clearly manifested.

Under the influence of Giorgio de Chirico, whom he discovered around the same time as Picabia,²⁷ Ernst intensified his engagement with illusionism. Unlike the diagrams, these pictures once again fulfill some of the minimal conditions for illusionistic representation. Their boundaries conform to the traditional rectangular format and frame a fictive world. Their objects stand upon a perspectively foreshortened platform, as is necessary in illusionism for the placement and presentation of heavy material objects. However, this platform proves to be an unstable ground, and the visibility of the fictive world is in many ways obstructed. Rectangular format, platform, and perspectival foreshortening are



FIGURE 10

Max Ernst, *Sodalites shirkers snow-covered mountain and valley dwellers raisins and almonds beat the natives of central Europe to sea foam and following advanced denudation hurry ahead of events with the best intentions (sodaliten schneeberger drückethäler)*, also always the best man wins, 1920. 15 × 22 cm, gouache, ink, and pencil (overpainting on a print) (S/M no. 342). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

subject to a secondary purpose. As a decoy, they lure the gaze into the trap of a completely rigidified, hollowed-out, and broken illusion.

In the example of *Sodalites (sodaliten schneeberger drückethäler)*²⁸ (fig. 10), the landscape serves as a platform upon which the represented plant-machines are located through perspective. However, the perspectival construction is broken and ambiguously rendered. Are the lines that divide the landscape horizontally and vertically the section lines of a geological map, or are they areas of erosion and breaks in the terrain? Are they units of measurement or features of the represented world?

Or in *Stratified Rocks, Nature's Gift of Gneiss Lava Iceland Moss (schichtgestein naturgabe aus gneis)* (fig. 52), the extension into a depth of space, and with it the perspective,

FIGURE 11

From *Cologne Catalogue of Teaching Aids* (*Katalog der Kölner Lehrmittelanstalt*), 1914, p. 624.



is broken down into a stratification that takes over the whole picture. The layers of rock and ice cover the illusionistic space of the landscape and, at the same time, seal the picture plane.

Or, in the case of an untitled work also from 1920 (fig. 12), there is the question of whether the horizontal section lines depict the layered substrata of the landscape or a space receding into depth—or else, as a glance at the right edge of the picture would suggest, part of a stage set, which interlocks with another part of the set behind it. The figures—made from textiles, palettes, and tubes—again multiply the possible interpretations. One observes the interactions that arise between their individual parts and the strata. In the middle of the picture, the horizon line merges with the joint in the central figure; the nearest and farthest points in the pictorial space collapse; the illusion is fixed to the picture plane. A firmly modeled, pyramidal tube towers directly overhead, once more giving rise to a clear spatial effect.

In all three works, a platform can be found that simultaneously displays and parodies its illusionistic function of creating the conditions necessary for location and physical concretion. Regarding location, the following should be

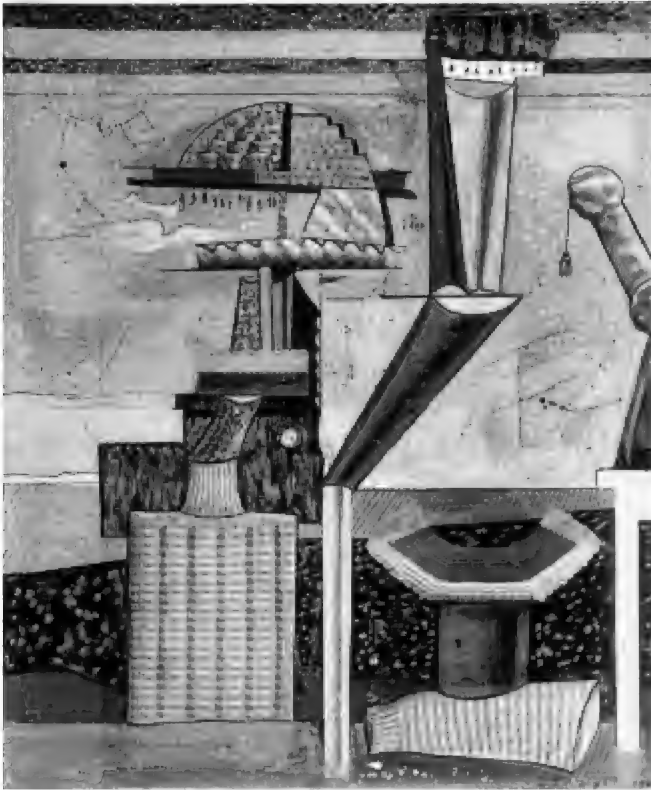
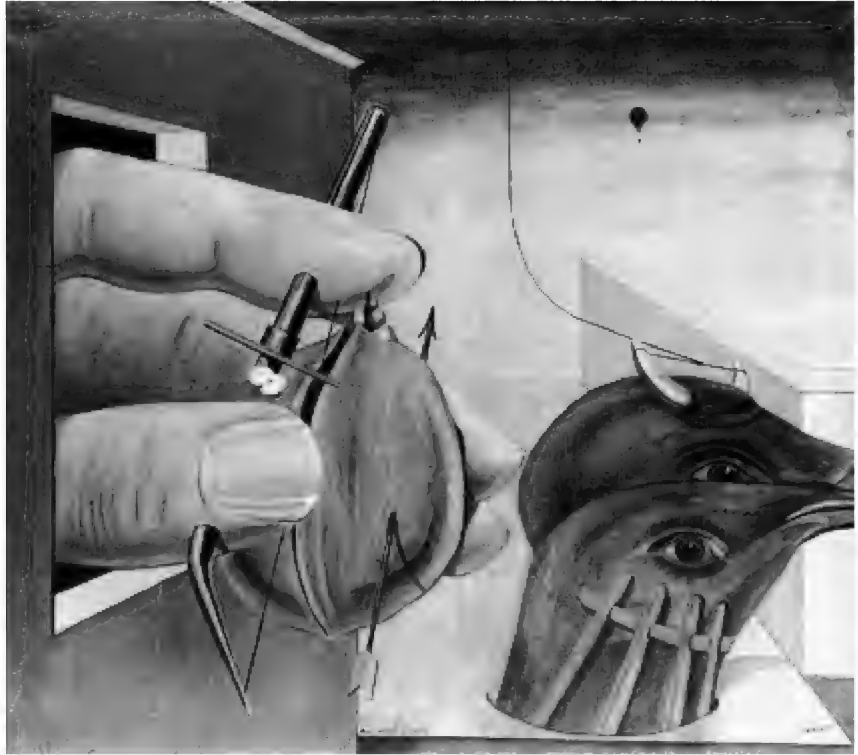


FIGURE 12

Max Ernst, *Untitled*, 1920. 30 × 25 cm, gouache, pen, ink, and pencil (overpainting on a print), mounted on board. Private collection (S/M no. 357). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

emphasized: the horizontals and convergences of perspective construction are ambiguously rendered, so that it is impossible to decide whether what is being viewed are rock layers or cartographic symbols, elements of the pictorial world, means of their representation, or pieces of a stage set. They do not form any clearly defined outer layer or platform that would serve as a plane upon which the represented objects are located. The same fate befalls the physical concretion of the represented world. It is implied but has always already been lost. We see remarkably unspecific, essentially used-up things. The isolated parts of photographs that can be clearly recognized as textures, such as the different knitting patterns (fig. 12), remain foreign objects between textureless layers of paint. (Other photographs may have interested the artist because of their material indeterminacy, such as the model of angiosperms he painted over in *Sodalites* [figs. 10, 11]).

FIGURE 13
 Max Ernst,
Oedipus Rex,
 1922. 93 ×
 102 cm, oil on
 canvas. Private
 collection (S/M
 no. 496). © 2012
 Artists Rights
 Society (ARS),
 New York /
 ADAGP, Paris.



Max Ernst was the “painter of illusions,” as Louis Aragon dubbed him in the text of the same name from 1923.²⁹ This illusionism—which so fascinated Aragon, Breton, and the other surrealists-to-be when Ernst’s paintings were first shown in Paris in 1921³⁰—can be designated as a parodic play with the products of decomposition. The famous paintings that were made between 1921 (e.g., *Celebes*) and 1924 (e.g., *Woman*, *Old Man*, and *Flower* [*Weib*, *Greis* und *Blume*]) also display the secondary, hollowed-out qualities of a fossil illusionism (plate 3). In *Oedipus Rex* from 1922 (fig. 13), Ernst uses the demolished perspective construction, reified into wall parts, to assemble a foreground set that obstructs the pictorial field and opens into a peculiarly abstract, empty expanse, basically inaccessible to physical beings.³¹ A firm ground is nowhere to be seen; in the foreground is a perforated plinth in which two imaginary beasts are trapped. In the dark window to the left, it is again suggested that the boundaries of the

picture are inaccessible and also elude our gaze in hidden spaces; at the same time, the rectangular format of the pictorial field is repeated. While the pictorial field recedes into a purely optical, materially dulled world that is emptied of any sensual specificity, in the window a figure of destroyed tactility appears that is at once hallucinatorily powerful and unreal.³²

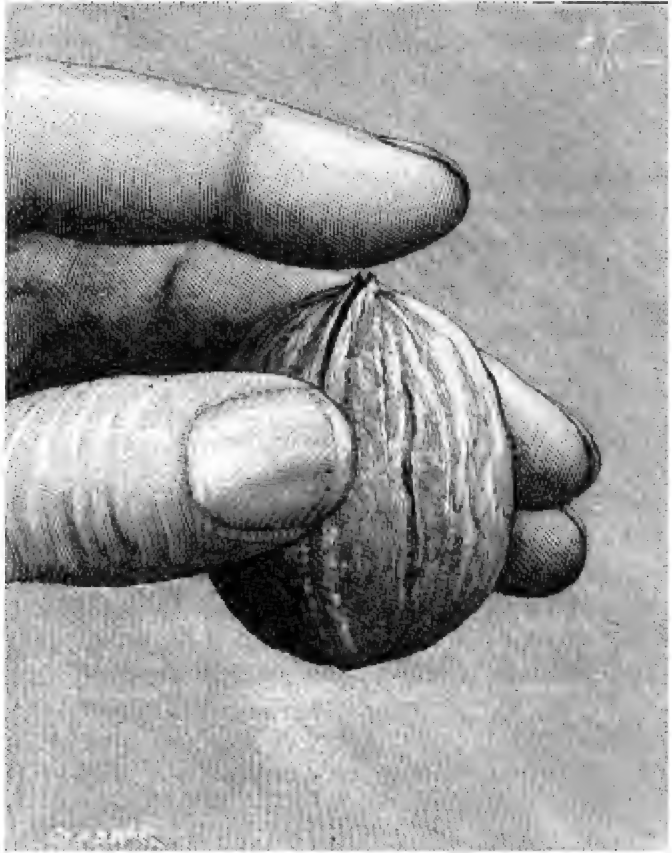
As I have attempted to demonstrate, this secondary illusionism so influential for the emergence of surrealism had already been formulated by Ernst in the overpaintings of 1920. In addition, in these paintings it becomes plainly visible that the fossil hardening and emaciation of the illusionistic image is based on procedures of modern image production. In the source picture for *Sodalites* (figs. 10, 11), besides the material dullness of the plants, Ernst was interested in their ordered arrangement, the way they can be broken down and reproduced, as well as the clear cuts through stems and blossoms. The overpainting accentuates these qualities. The fragmented perspective and the repeated, ambiguous carving up of the landscape refers to the overpainting's underlay, the mechanically reproduced image from the *Cologne Catalogue of Teaching Aids*, which Ernst drew from during this time. The result can be considered a fossil illusionism because the distorted preservation of platform, perspective, heaviness, and materiality is based on a pictorial readymade whose contours and arrangement are manifest in the surface of the picture.

REPETITION OF IMITATION

It is less obvious, and in the critical literature on Max Ernst has gone unnoticed, that with this fossil illusionism, distorted remnant forms of imitation also return. These exhausted and mortified mimetisms call attention to a natural origin of artistic procedures but do not claim to present a persuasive mimetic relationship. Instead, the viewer is invited to follow the play of mimetisms through a labyrinth of multiple, competing analogies that point toward the origins of artwork.

The rock substratum in *Arp Microgram*—according to the second interpretation presented here—refers to the existence of an analogy between the diagram and geologic layers; this analogy suggests a relationship of imitation between the two. In the other diagrams, it is also striking that their graphemes are connected with traces of petrification and rock strata. In the fossil illusionism of the overpaintings, we also encounter such exhausted natural analogies. As Louis Aragon

FIGURE 14
From *La Nature* 26 (September
1891).



did in 1930,³³ one might well speak of *mise-en-scènes* that present the metaphoric relationship between nature and art, and in this way raise the question of the origin of art while simultaneously parodying it.

For example, in *Stratified Rocks* (figs. 52, 53), the source image underneath is enclosed in layers of paint, as the fossil horse is enclosed by the Ice Age landscape. The horse's rear hoofs explicitly call attention to this analogy: they were first painted over and then traced in pen on top of the paint. There is a similar detail in *Sodalites* (figs. 10, 11): the oak blossoms on the far left and the hazelnut flower in the middle grow up from behind the stratified landscape, as if they were returning to visibility from the condition of having been painted over. Or there is the work (whereabouts currently unknown) titled *Winter Landscape: Vaporization of*



FIGURE 15

Max Ernst, *Winter Landscape: Vaporization of the Vulcanized Iron Bride to Produce the Necessary Bed Warmth* (*winterlandschaft: vergasung der vulkanisierten eisenbraut zur erzeugung der nötigen bettwärme*), 1921. 15.5 × 20.5 cm, gouache, ink, and pencil (overpainting on a print), lost (S/M no. 410). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

the Vulcanized Iron Bride to Produce the Necessary Bed Warmth (*winterlandschaft: vergasung der vulkanisierten eisenbraut zur erzeugung der nötigen bettwärme*) (fig. 15): here, the “iron bride” is swallowed into the depths of the earth, as is the source image by the layers of overpainting. Or, most explicitly, in *Frozen Landscapes, Icicles, and Mineral Types of the Female Body* (*eislandschaften, eiszapfen und gesteinsarten des weiblichen Körpers*; plate 1), two fields are juxtaposed along the bottom edge of the picture: the one on the right shows the wallpaper pattern of the support; the one on the left, geologic strata.

The list of analogies in which natural process and artistic activity play upon one another could go on, but presumably the above examples clarify how these mimetisms function. The bringing into effect of a metaphoric relationship be-

tween procedure and natural process is only as important as this relationship's hasty decomposition. To begin with, the comparison makes obvious the difference between deep-time processes of sedimentation and stratification, on the one hand, and the small-scale, small-format dilettantism of the Dadaists, on the other. What's more, the Dadaist pictures are so subdivided and so heterogeneously articulated that an imaginative, metamorphic seeing that would have the potential to instigate metaphoric exchange is never able to develop. Finally, it is not at all certain which procedures Ernst is using or, if they actually could be determined, to what they could be metaphorically compared. This last point merits further elaboration.

It is often the case that the overpaintings make themselves out to be collages. Werner Spies has dedicated a fundamental study to this hide-and-seek of procedural logic, which Aragon had already appreciated;³⁴ Spies's analysis of *Katharina undulata* (fig. 16) should be given particular emphasis here. At first, one assumes that this work is a collage of differently patterned papers—an impression that Ernst cultivated through selective retouching. He changed the pattern and outlined the pattern fragments in black, giving them the physically self-contained quality of material fragments. Only upon closer scrutiny and careful attention to the pattern does the picture reveal itself as an overpainting of a uniformly ornamented underlay, which runs continuously from the base of the figure to the individual components. Just how seriously the artist took this game of confusion is shown in the joke of procedural logic at the picture's lower edge: the section being passed off as the pictorial ground is in fact the only section that was cut from another pattern and glued on. Furthermore, in addition to Spies's observations, one notices how, to the left, a red-dotted mucilage runs down over this alleged underlay. The actually employed technique of overpainting appears as a motif within the pictorial fiction in exactly the place where Ernst collaged on top of the pictorial ground a piece that is taken for the pictorial ground.

The earth's interior section lines from which Ernst's geologic landscapes are constructed can be read as motifs that figure both the technique of overpainting and the cuts of collage. Thus, entirely different production-aesthetic concepts are brought into connection. Comparing earth layers with layers of paint evokes the deep-time slowness of the processes of natural history. However, seeing an analogy between earth layers and the cuttings of collage places the collagist's work in relation not to processes of nature, but to human interventions. Stratified

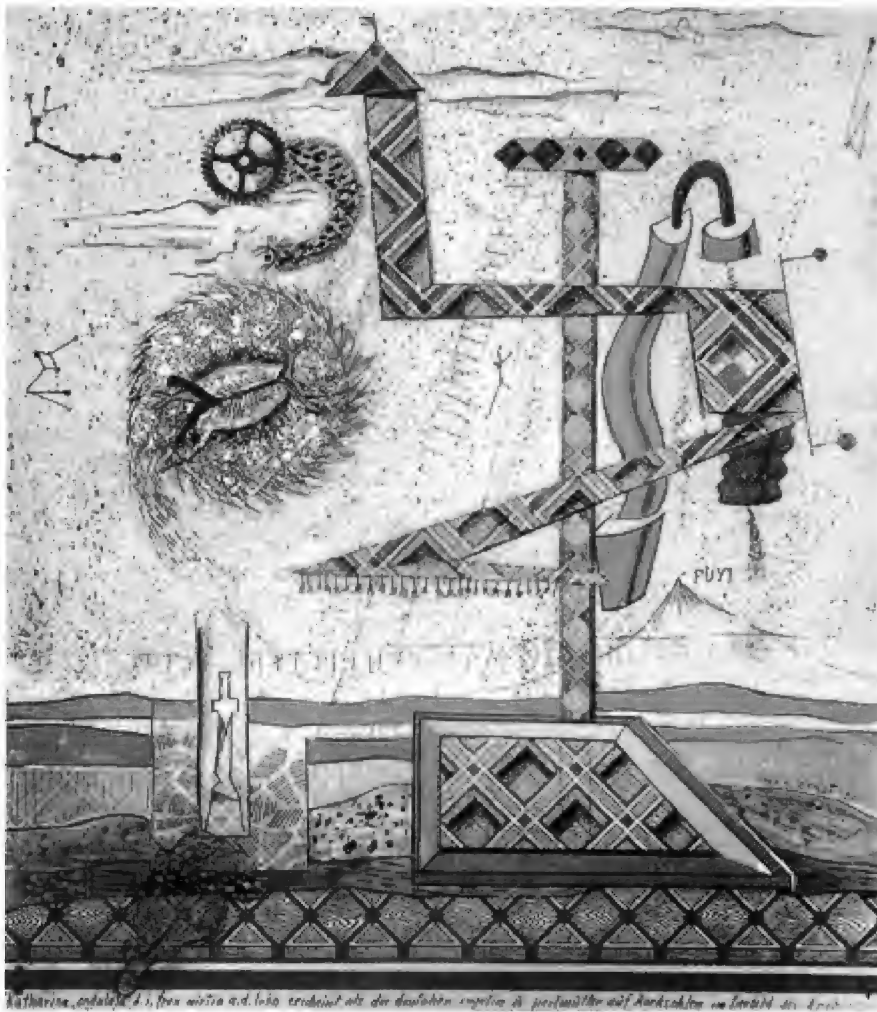


FIGURE 16
Max Ernst,
*Katharina
Ondulata,
that is Madam
Hostess on
the Lahn*
(*Katharina
ondulata d.i.
frau wirtin a.
d. lahn*), 1920.
31.2 × 27
cm, gouache
and pencil
(overpainting
on a print),
mounted on
board. Private
collection
(S/M no.
356). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

Rocks (figs. 52, 53) seems to be an example of precisely this analogy: Ernst, the avant-garde artist who dissects both living and inorganic nature, takes pains to ensure that each organic connection between the parts of the horse is replaced by a mechanical one. However, *Stratified Rocks* is not a collage—it's an overpainting; and even when erroneously taken for a collage, it does not convey the impression of having been produced with freehand cuts. The rigidity of the space and the

tension of the layers suggest not so much the agility of a knife or scissors, but instead directionless forces working against each other (sedimentation, glaciation, stratification).

Next, let's take a look at a small-scale, small-format piece of Dada bricolage that makes a satirical masquerade of the sublime processes of *natura naturans*. It is also part of the game to play off disparate metaphors against one another. In an overpainting of knitting patterns (fig. 12), the geological analogy is confronted by a second one, between layers of paint and the stacking of objects or their insertion into one another. Let's consider the curious detail at the picture's right edge, where the underground layers unexpectedly reveal themselves as a stage set with another white layer that has been inserted into it. The figures made from knitting patterns and tubes present the same production-aesthetic concept of layering as the stacking of elements. This process can be repeated as long as the figures remain in balance or until the pictorial field has been filled up. In fact, Ernst not only stacks knitting pattern on top of tube and tube on top of knitting pattern; he also stacks stratum on top of stratum, even in the region of the sky, until the upper edge of the picture has been reached.

Finally, one work takes the play of analogies further than all the others, only to lapse into an idling that allows the parody of the imitation of nature to be recognized as a mechanical repetition (plate 1). Against a winter landscape, at the lower edge of the picture stands an unfolded, three-part panel—even more clearly a stage set than in figure 12—that obstructs the view of the winter landscape. Evidently, this is a case of a *mise en abyme* in the overpainting, whose layers of paint occlude the view of the overpainted wallpaper. In the unfolded panel, the procedure of overpainting is staged twice: as an object, the panel is similar to the stacked objects or interlocking parts of a stage set, but as an image, it calls attention to the analogy between layers of paint and geologic strata. On the right, we see the wallpaper pattern to be painted over, on the left, rock layers, and in between, a rendition of the wallpaper pattern in hatching. The transition from the prefabricated (readymade) wallpaper to the traditional artistic medium of hatching to the painted pictorial motif is made didactically explicit. These are three different forms of repetition: repetition as readymade in the wallpaper, repetition as artistic technique in the hatching, and repetition as natural process in the rock layers. When the work as a whole is analyzed, it becomes clear that repetition is its *modus operandi*.

Wallpaper is typical as a pictorial underlay for Ernst's overpainting, in that like the botanical models (figs. 10, 11), knitting patterns (fig. 12), or diagrams of machines and animals (figs. 52, 53), wallpaper exemplifies image production through serial repeatability. The comparison of wallpaper to hatching and geologic strata in the specific setting of a frozen landscape creates a metaphor that, in turn, forms the basis for a metonymy. From the serial underlay, mechanically repeated hatching lines and repetitive layers of rock emerge. This production is continued in the upper portion of the picture, following a shift from the serially produced to the serial production machines that hover on wires above the ground. The metonymy is exemplified on the level of motif and on the level of procedure:

On the level of motif, metonymy is represented through the red wheel in the center of the picture, which is accompanied by a vector pointing from the unfolded three-part panel upward toward the machine. This is the vector of metonymic shift from the serially produced wallpaper to the serially producing machines. On the level of procedure, it is shown through the incremental graphic production of the machine from elements of the wallpaper pattern. On the right, Ernst introduces a second ornament into the pattern of cone shapes,³⁵ while on the left, he retouches the same cone pattern into two windmills. On the far left, there then follows a machine whose upper half consists of a monumental gear wheel. Below this, there had once been a second rotating mechanism similar to a ship's screw or propeller. Let's look more closely at this destroyed wheel: Ernst may have first drawn four propeller blades in the white spaces of the cone pattern and painted them yellow, and then doubled the number of blades by drawing four more on top of the cones. As with the windmills or the large gear wheel, in order to indicate the axis of rotation, he then added a circular mark in the middle, probably by means of a tube dipped in paint, which he used as a stamp. What happened next can best be described as "destruction," especially since it results from the playful application of an idling machine. At the hub of the repetitive mechanical movement carried out by gear wheels or windmills, ship's screws or propellers, Ernst made himself into a stamping machine, and stamped until both the wallpaper pattern and the retouching could hardly be made out. As if all energy had not yet been expended, he scattered a few more imprints across the picture and then exited along a trail of stampings that lead in a playfully curving line from the site of destruction to the left edge of the picture. This line follows a

movement to the dead point at which the artistic procedure of overpainting cannot generate any more mimetisms. Analogy development has reached its end, and in its place stamping appears, which playfully and compulsively repeats the serial-mechanical production of the picture's underlay (the wallpaper).

Imitation as the metaphoric re-creation of natural processes breaks down into various mimetisms, and these refer to a principle of production beyond imitation: that is, to repetition. Geologic layering is not the origin of the overpainting; it is only one of various possible analogies in a labyrinth of metaphors for artistic activity, such as cutting apart, stacking, interlocking, or the superimposition of stage sets. However, each of these options points back to the mechanical-serial production of the picture's underlay. The search for origins uncovers repetitions, as Michel Foucault discovered in Raymond Roussel's prose: "At the most enigmatic moment, when all paths stop and when one is at the point of being lost, or at the absolute beginning, when one is on the threshold of something else, the labyrinth suddenly again offers the same: its last puzzle, the trap hidden in the center—it is a mirror behind which the identical is located."³⁶

In this world of disfigured identity, surrogate creations thrive most heartily. Examples include a fossil horse (fig. 52, 53), which Ernst neatly dismantled into its individual organs and then reconnected with mechanical prostheses, and tower-like plant machines (figs. 10, 11), which seem to have been stuck into the lacerated ground and which inflict further cuts with the sharp edges of their shadows. In both pictures, the force of a surrogate life still pulsates, in *Stratified Rocks* in the intestine, which inflates like a wind sock, and in *Sodalites* in the labyrinthine coil of space between the plant towers. Vectors and ducts indicate that between mortified landscape and mortified organisms, remnant or surrogate forms of a vital exchange have been preserved. As in Roussel's language, so also here painting "experiences a death that clings to life, and its very life is prolonged in death."³⁷

CUT AND RESEMBLANCE

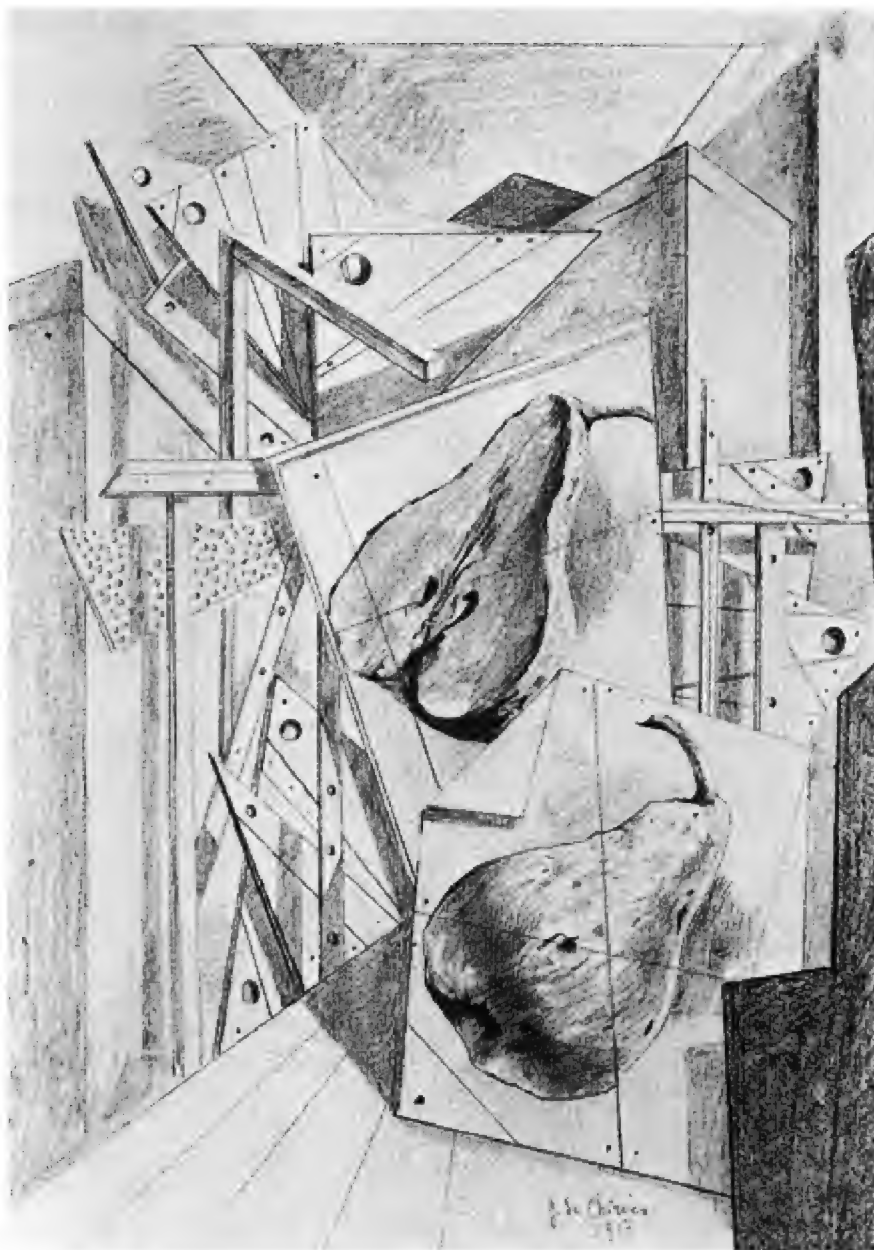
Residues in which processual mimesis is preserved through parody can already be found in the prototypes of a collaging art, Picasso's *papiers collés*. The glued-in pears in his *Bowl with Fruit, Violin, and Wineglass* (fig. 17), dilettantishly painted or cut from illustrated broadsides, are "cut" in two regards. By cutting the paper,



FIGURE 17
Pablo Picasso, *Bowl with Fruit, Violin, and Wineglass* (December 1912–January 1913). 65 × 50.5 cm, pasted paper, aquarelle, crayon, oils, and charcoal on board. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art. © 2012 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

the collagist accomplishes what a painter would achieve by painting a cut pear. That which is represented—the motif of the cut pear—is imitated through that which is produced: a pear that has been cut out of paper.³⁸ In this way, Picasso's cubism gives an ironic answer to the question of the presence of an object in a picture: even if a painted fruit cannot be taken and eaten, at least it is possible to cut off a slice. A related topos of iconic criticism—that painted objects above all lack one thing, their back sides—was the impetus for a drawing of de Chirico's from 1917 (fig. 18), with which Ernst is known to have been familiar.³⁹

FIGURE 18
Giorgio de
Chirico,
*Autumnal
Geometry*
(*Geometria
autunnale*),
1917. 32 × 22
cm, pencil on
paper, Berlin,
Neue National-
galerie. © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
SIAE, Rome.



The cubistically furnished interior contains two drawings. There is likely no way to relate them to one another without contradiction. However, the attempt to find a relationship between them gives rise to a reflection on representation and production, cut and fruit.

Are they, as one might first think, the two corresponding halves of a single pear? No, since the stem above curves to the right, and the one below, to the left. Besides, how could each half of a single pear retain an entire stem? So is it a single half of a pear, shown once from the front and once from the back? The fold in the sheet below implies that it is, and that one only has to turn the drawing over in order to see the other view of the same pear half. The play of possibilities is not yet at its end: it is surely no coincidence that de Chirico varies the placement of the cut. While the lower pear half seems to have been cut right next to the stem, the upper pear half clearly has a greater volume. Thus, it is two pear halves from two different pears. By the time one arrives at this conclusion, doubts have arisen as to the certainty with which it can be argued that the drawing below even represents a pear half. Couldn't it also be an entire pear, rendered by a draftsman who favors angular contours and a severe styling?

One pear cut in two halves has become one pear half-drawn twice, and this has again become two halves of two pears or one and a half pears. Surely this confusion regarding how many and which pears (or pear halves) can be seen is the humorous culmination of a reflection on the necessity of the cut in illusionistic painting: first there must be a cut through the stem, in order to get the fruit from the tree, and next there must be a cut through the fruit, in order to represent it illusionistically (that is, without a back side). Hence, Picasso's and de Chirico's critiques of illusion do not depend on the imitation of growth, as Arp's does, but instead on the imitation of the cut, which at once puts an end to growth and founds representation. In this way the meaning of imitation is transformed, in the sense that instead of bringing the imitated thing to life, imitation abuses the imitated thing with the mechanical and mortifying efficiency of the cut.

Ernst saw de Chirico's paintings, including the still life of pears, for the first time in Munich in 1919, and from them drew conclusions not limited to the adoption of de Chirico's imagery. It has often been demonstrated that the spatial effects analyzed here as "fossil illusionism" were prefigured in de Chirico's paralyzed world of stage sets, with spaces lacking materiality or atmosphere; surrogate forms such as dressmakers' mannequins, baking molds, statues, gloves,

and shellfish taking the place of massive bodies; ground planes plunging away, conflicting perspectives and depths of field. Less striking, though just as important for the understanding of Ernst's Dada art, is that de Chirico's fossil illusionism also contains moments of secondary, mortified imitation—for example, the halved pear as the imitation of the cut that is a prerequisite of representation. Ernst multiplies the varieties of cut, so that the cut of the collagist is compounded by the sectionings made in diagrams and overpaintings. Moreover, he expands the possibilities for perceiving the cut as imitation, so that it is made to imitate the earth's layers, geological or anatomical analysis, the action of stacking, or the shifting of scenes. These are mimetisms of the second order, which play upon the stronger production principle of repetition and parodically preserve, under repetition's hegemony, the ideal of a natural origin of artistic procedure. In view of this tightly interwoven context, which connects Ernst's procedures with Picasso's and de Chirico's, it comes as no surprise that at the point in time when Ernst fundamentally transformed his art under the sign of surrealism, he sought a renewed engagement with Picasso and de Chirico—in particular, with their pears.

In 1925, in the year following the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (*Manifeste du surréalisme*) and before his first surrealist series, *Natural History* (*Histoire naturelle*; 1925/26), Ernst made a series of still lifes of pears, in which different procedures and forms of representation are tested. The most complex of these (fig. 19) shows three possibilities for representing a pear: in front, there is a naturalistic pear; behind that, a diagram of a pear; and in between, a pear fossil. The juxtaposition of the three forms of representation may have been preceded by a small iconic-theoretical drama enacted between naturalistic representation, diagrammatic projection, and fossilization. The naturalistic pear was projected onto the grid by means of a geometric operation. In his Dada pictures of 1919–21, Ernst had already employed similar procedures to transform one type of image into another. For example, in *Frozen Landscapes* (plate 1), the landscape is unfolded in order to show both its geological cross-section and its pictorial underlay (the wallpaper), from which, in turn, the machine emerges that hovers over the landscape. The transformation progresses from pictorial landscape to geological illustration to machine diagram, and ends in stamping the surface of the picture (see above). This movement that begins with iconic painting (landscape) and ends with indexical marking (stamping) also characterizes the still

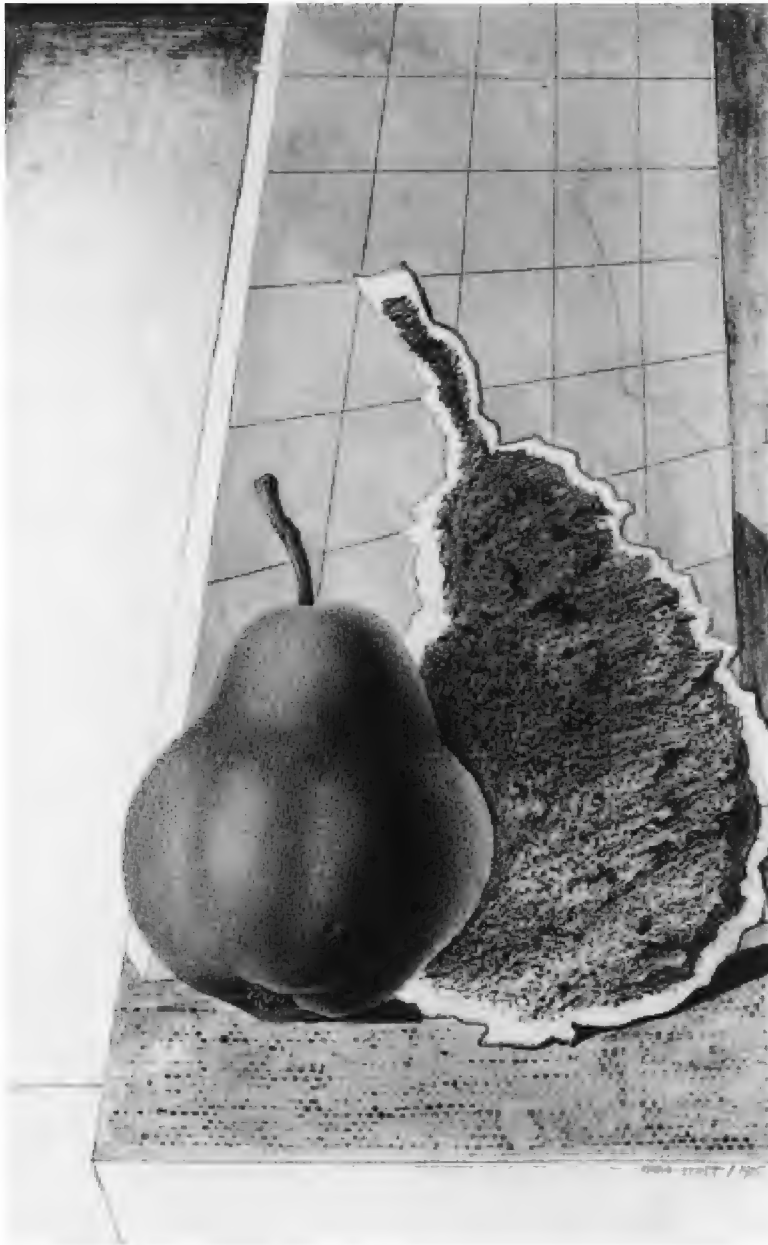


FIGURE 19
Max Ernst, *Pear (Poire)*,
1925. 29 × 18 cm,
aquarelle, pencil, frottage
on paper, Berlin, Neue
Nationalgalerie (S/M
no. 773). © 2012 Artists
Rights Society (ARS),
New York / ADAGP,
Paris.

life of pears from 1925. However, indexical marking is no longer a dead point, but as frottage it occupies the center of the picture and brings the picture to life. The pear frottage, which occupies the space between the naturalistic and diagrammatic pears, clearly distinguishes itself from these two types of image. The fossilized pear wins out against the grid, seeming to tear through it with its stony fault line. And the fossilized pear prevails against the naturalistic pear by provoking its own form of seeing, an imaginative seeing of resemblances. This latter is to be described at greater length in what follows.

A contemporaneous work shows another pear in an empty expanse of landscape (fig. 20). The satirical title *The Pear that Resembles Me* (*La poire qui me ressemble*) lures the viewer into a trap, since it both demands and blocks the seeing of resemblances. With its clearly determined distribution of light and shadow and its crisp contour, the naturalistic pear resists any attempt to discover resemblances within it. In this way, it is similar to the naturalistic pear in the still life discussed above, whose modeling is equally unambiguous and whose contours are equally sharply defined. One might think that these two fruits had been cut from an illustrated broadside and glued in, and that these foreign objects, starkly differentiated from the pictorial ground, were intended to block the imaginative seeing of resemblances.⁴⁰ The frottaged pear is a different story: despite its jagged fault line, it is closely connected with the pictorial ground (the paper shimmers through the traces of graphite), and in turn forms its own pictorial ground that provokes an imaginative seeing of resemblances. The pear curves to the right with bodily insistence; it becomes possible to make out a beak and eyes—virtually a whole bird family. Retouchings on the upper part of the pear, to the left, demarcate a round eye and a beak, and below there are additional marks that would stimulate additional discoveries.

The seeing of resemblances is an imaginative perception that can animate the lifeless and also give it figural form. In no way tied to art, most often practiced on objects and manifestations not produced by human hands (clouds, stones, knotholes), it accompanies the art history of the modern era as a marginal phenomenon that is nonetheless given much attention: from Leonardo da Vinci's famous stains on the wall to the discussion of "seeing-in" in analytic philosophy or Georges Didi-Huberman's iconic theology of marbling.⁴¹ It is surprising that the central pear fossil in Ernst's still life provokes this type of seeing, because it was consistently avoided in Ernst's early work (as in Picasso's cubism or de

FIGURE 20

Max Ernst, *The Pear that Resembles Me* (*La poire qui me ressemble*), 1924. 25.5 × 16.7 cm, aquarelle, frottage and collage on paper. Private collection (S/M no. 771). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



Chirico's metaphysical interiors). In his early work, a crisply cut, occasionally small-scale and materially heterogeneous, always multiply incised articulation impedes an imaginative perception that would vitalize the surface and thus "discover" a resemblance of the dissimilar (such as fossil pears and bird families). Another type of the seeing of resemblances was nevertheless characteristic of Ernst's Dadaism: a "seeing apart" (*Zersehen*).⁴² This action separates a pictorial motif from its iconic context and places it into a new one in order to rediscover it as another motif. Photos of ladies' hats cut out, turned upside down, and lined

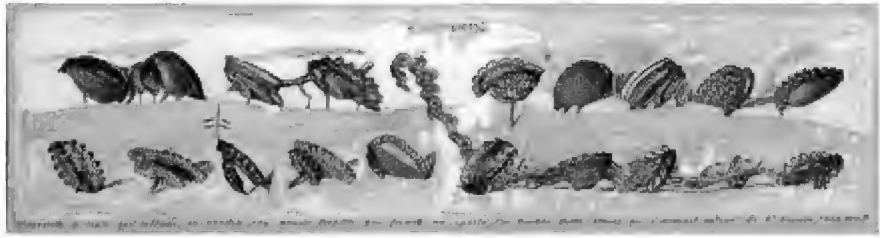


FIGURE 21

Max Ernst, *The Sandworm Who Reties Her Sandal (l'ascaride de sable)*, 1920. 11.8 × 50.5 cm, gouache and pencil (overpainting on a print), mounted on board. Private collection (S/M no. 360). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

up on a strip of desert now look like insects (fig. 21). Louis Aragon seized upon these manipulations and dubbed Ernst the creator of a new visual metaphors, an art of transference of meaning different from the cubists' formal use of collage.⁴³ In Picasso's cubism, the difference between a human body and the corpus of a stringed instrument can be minimal (fig. 22). Nevertheless, one object turns into another not because it inspires an imaginative and enlivening way of seeing, and not because it conceals the other within it, as in a reversible image (*Vexierbild*).⁴⁴ Instead, the transition between two motifs is always specified as an effect of breaking down and recombination: breaking down the image into sub-iconic elements (dot, straight line, curve, circle, wavy line), and their recombination through shifting, reflection, folding, or rotation—in short, through operations that are carried out upon and with a surface.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Ernst's Dadaist method for making one motif out of another involves individual images being broken down without their iconicity as such being affected or a sub-iconic level being exposed. When Ernst cuts apart a fashion catalog, he preserves as the smallest unit images of ladies' hats. Their ambiguity is not the product of a new distribution of their sub-iconic elements; rather, ambiguity is disclosed in the original iconic element itself through its being cut out, displaced, sometimes rotated, and put into a new context.

In 1924–25, when Ernst was attempting to make the Dadaist method of breaking down and “seeing apart” subordinate to another form of unstable visuality—the seeing of resemblances as provoked by frottage—he again sought out an engagement with art oriented to the procedure of the cut: that is, with Picasso's

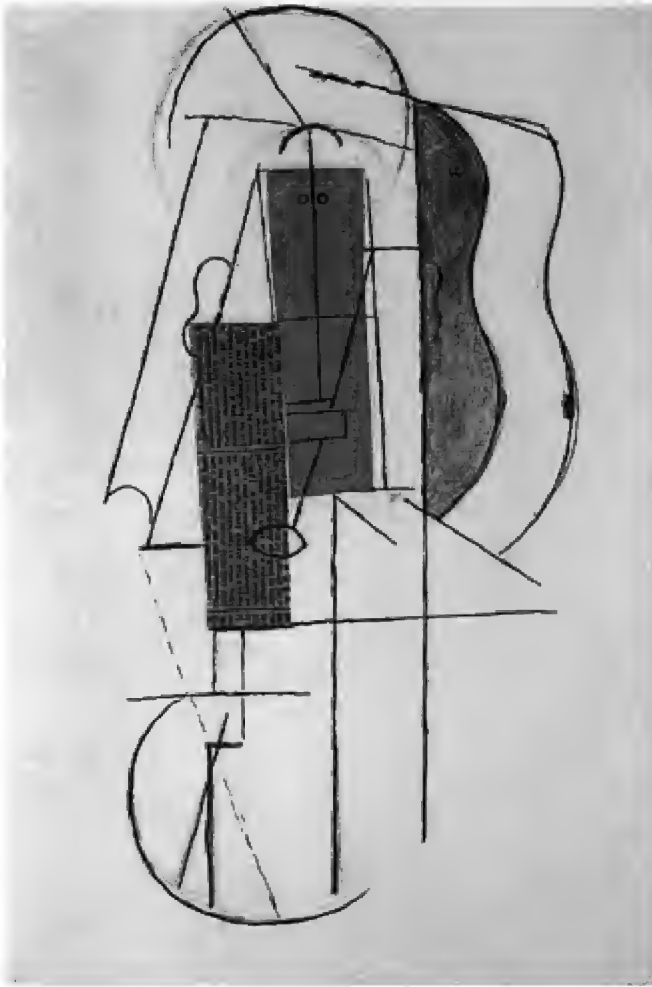


FIGURE 22

Pablo Picasso, *Head (Tête)*, spring 1913. 43 × 29 cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art. © 2012 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

cubism and its *mise-en-scène* in de Chirico's still lifes. The still life of pears from 1925 can be understood as a working-through in which Ernst detaches himself from his Dadaist operations and their models (de Chirico, Picasso), in order to introduce a new procedure: frottage. Between the naturalistic pear, which seems to have been cut out and pasted in, and the pear diagram, he allows a third image form to emerge, which requires an imaginative seeing. While a geometric projection leads from the naturalistic to the diagrammatic pear, the pear frottage sets

in motion an imaginative projection. While the transformation from the fruit to the diagram is carried out on the surface of the support, the transformation of the fossilized pear into eyes and a beak brings a depth into play—the psychic depth of the imagination, which Ernst attempts to evoke with the medium of frottage.⁴⁶

SURREALIST SIMULACRA

In the same year as the pear collage, Max Ernst completed more than 130 frottages. He selected 34 of these, had them reproduced in heliogravure, and published the portfolio *Natural History* in 1926, in an edition from Galerie Jean Bucher.⁴⁷

First of all, I should mention an influential change, already ascertained by Spies, that separates Ernst's surrealist pictures from his Dadaist overpaintings. These new works' underlay is no longer a mechanical-serial readymade (such as wallpaper, botanical models, or diagrams), but consists of surfaces such as wood grain, textured leather, fabric, or dried oil paint, which are indicative of natural processes.⁴⁸ Through the technique of rubbing, these different textures transform into a homogeneous surface value. The reproduction of the frottages in heliogravure strengthens the homogenizing effect, first, because all the prints are given more or less the same format and, second, because the material accumulation of rubbing vanishes into the paper.⁴⁹ The material heterogeneity of the Dada pictures closes them off from a unifying and enlivening mode of perception. By contrast, Ernst's surrealist frottages show a homogenous materiality, which also corresponds to a formal and iconographic uniformity.

The residual traces of rubbing provoke a seeing of resemblances that animates the picture surface. The repletion of these traces with imaginative possibilities also enables the other mode of seeing resemblances that Ernst already explored in the Dada pictures: "seeing apart" as the discovery of hidden figures. In *Natural History*, numerous reversible images are concealed, of greater or lesser significance. As visual parapraxes, these beasts and goblins secreted into the contours of another pictorial motif remain secondary as compared with the vitalization of the entire surface of the frottage. For their part, however, reversible image effects underlie this seeing of resemblances, which animates the textures and infuses the picture as a whole with a ghostly vitality—for example, in the sudden change from textured leather into the veins of a leaf or the leaves of a tree in *Confidences* (fig. 23). But unlike the reversible image, which only allows seeing either one

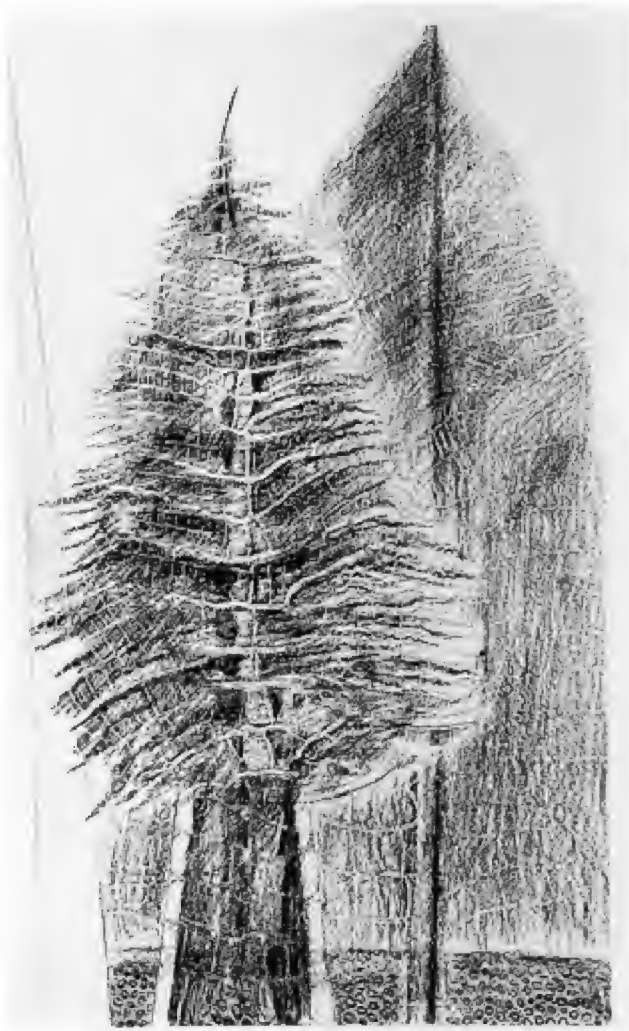


FIGURE 23

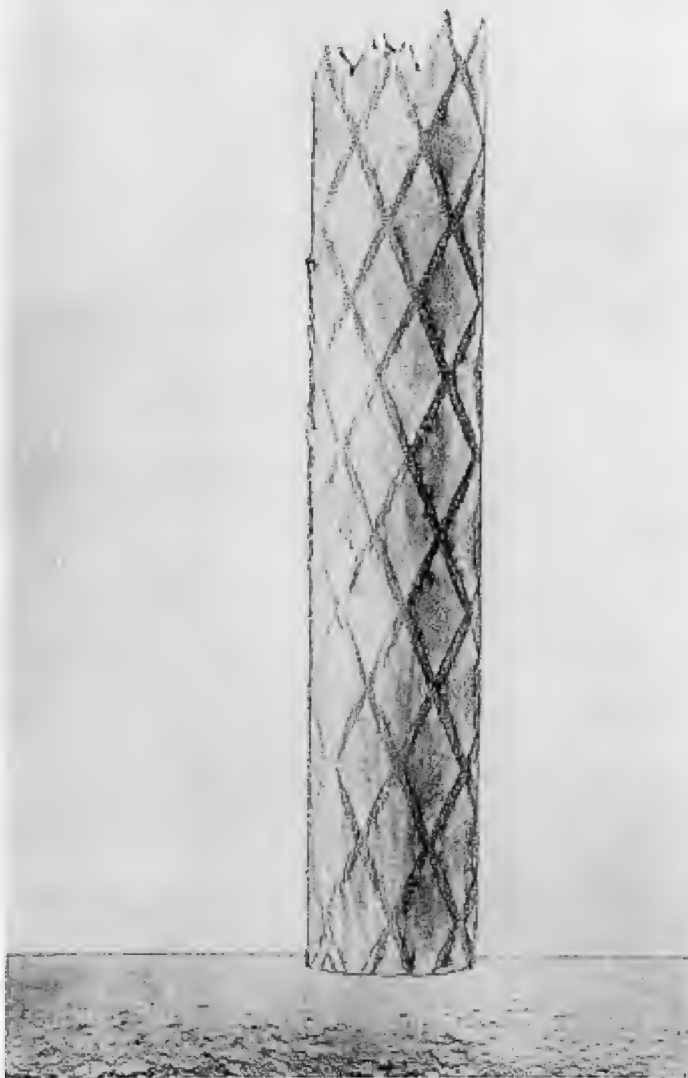
Max Ernst, *Confidences (Les Confidences)* (*Histoire naturelle*, print 17), 1925/26. 42 × 25 cm (image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 806). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

image or the other, in frottage the sudden change is not an excluding movement.⁵⁰ The attraction lies specifically in perceiving both the leather and the leaf.

A fossil tree grows out of a fossil leaf (fig. 23). Not only is the growth of petrifacts a parodic inversion, the relationship is also inverted between part and whole, leaf and tree. What's more, an inversion allows leaf and tree to grow out of textured leather (is it a ladies' handbag?). The plant kingdom grows out of the

FIGURE 24

Max Ernst, *He Will Fall Far from Here* (*Il tombera loin d'ici*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 7), 1925/26. 43.1 × 25.7 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 798). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



animal kingdom; the tree grows out of the leaf. This haunting growth that turns the natural order upside down arises from the mortifying technique of frottage, its fragmenting and fossilizing procedural logic.

A scouring rush⁵¹ is placed in a landscape (fig. 24) and cut off by a line nearly as sharp as the horizon, which divides the page only slightly above it. One notices the jagged edge where the husk has been broken, through which no juices have flowed for a long time, and the charred surface more reminiscent of a fossil specimen than the skin of an organic body. But fragmentation and petrification are not just effects of the lunar landscape surrounding the stalk stub. The stalk may never have taken root—it was a mortified growth from the start. Sure enough, exhausted movements can be discovered in the dead landscape. The title, *He Will Fall Far from Here* (*Il tombera loin d'ici*), provides a clue. There is a black mark on the horizon line: apparently the upper half is vanishing there right now—or rather, the upper nine-tenths that has been broken off from the plant is vanishing right now. A sublime space opens up, as inconceivably immense as the stalk in its former state. The trajectory of the fall, at the point where the black mark cuts across the horizon, is still far from completed, as the future tense in the title indicates. At the moment when this trajectory fills the pictorial space with motion, it strikes us with greater clarity how labile the position of the stalk stump is in the landscape; indeed, its surface, despite the place where it has been broken off, is like a fleeting apparition, and even the platform of the landscape pulsates eerily.

Frottaged growths never take root. Their origin is a procedure that generates still-inchoate, unstable illusion effects, located in a fossil world and isolated through the sharp edges of the picture. The cut, which in the pear collage was still opposed to frottage as a competing procedure, in *Natural History* has been absorbed by frottage, has in a sense been naturalized—either through an underlay so rich in texture that the incisions sink into the ground and become one with the frottaged world (fig. 47), or else through identification of the incision with the interior or exterior boundaries of the picture, with horizon or format.⁵² In print 17 (fig. 23), the cut on the left duplicates the boundary of the pictorial field, in order to support the seeing of resemblances and the effect they provoke of an eerie growth. The tree seems to grow out of the monstrously huge leaf; both hover as botanical phantoms above the horizon; the tree also seems to advance in the direction of the viewer by crossing the duplicated pictorial boundary.

Frottage is a procedure that isolates the objects it represents from any con-

text or presupposes this isolation. Like photography, it can be understood as indexically reproducing sections of reality and fragmenting the image of the latter. Its most suitable object, for whose scientific documentation frottage is put to use, is the archaeological or paleontological fragment—or, if we recall that rubbing was the infantile precursor of photography, the single coin or the fallen leaf. The object (in *Confidences*, a piece of leather) is laid underneath a sheet of paper, which is rubbed with soft graphite; the sheet may also be turned on the horizontal working surface. The capacity of the paper to be turned—in the tree, one notices the branch at the bottom left—refers to the way in which frottage, by fragmenting the world, makes it horizontal and tactile, and thus brings the fragment intimately near the viewer's body. It is thus all the more striking that tree and leaf are presented upright, as visual apparitions.

The leaf above all can be seen in a double way: as the pictorial support or as the figure of a leaf. On the one hand, it is nearly identical with the drawing paper, as if it were the tactile ground from which the figures of the frottage arise; on the other hand, it raises its unwavering central ridge into the vertical, and from there confronts the viewer as a monumental vision. The fragments, rootless tree and severed leaf, take part in a new form of continuous becoming, a type of growth that is not grounded in the soil and that can be better described as a hallucinatory blossoming. This growth expands into the depth of the pictorial field as well as into the space in front of the picture. The landscape of the background shimmers through the leaf; the tree, surrounded by a white aura, emerges from the tactile ground of the leaf and, on the left, departs from the drawing paper.

To reiterate, it is the seeing of resemblances as material vitalization that causes a penumbrous growth. This seeing of resemblances apprehends a world of second order—and in this way, as in its incorporation of the cut, it essentially differs from the seeing of resemblances instigated by Hans Arp: it apprehends a world that has turned to stone and that consists only of petrified images. Arp's accidental and pre-morphous inkblots aim to be understood as an originary ground and to be animated into unstable apparitions. For Arp, the seeing of resemblances proceeds with the hope of arriving at the pre-morphic origin of images. By contrast, Ernst's approach is secondary. The rubbed textures are dead natural remains and are preserved through a mortifying technique of imprinting. The images that arise from these textures are less originary images than after-images of living nature.

This secondary, spectral animation, as well as the indeterminate location of objects near the picture plane, brings the frottages into context with a mode of representation that traditionally had been attempted with still lifes: namely, *trompe l'oeil*. Louis Marin characterizes *trompe l'oeil* as a simulacrum and distinguishes it from classical representation by using the criterion of presence. While representation is founded on the absence of an object in order to represent that object in its ideality—an ideality and recognizability produced through the transparency and distancing capacity of the medium of representation—so this object made available through its absence becomes present again in *trompe l'oeil*. However, its presence is difficult to locate. If *trompe l'oeil* materializes the transparent picture plane, does it hover in front of or come into appearance by passing through it? If the medial boundaries become porous, then the distance to the represented object as ensured in representation collapses. In this way, *trompe l'oeil* takes on an obscure, spectral power, as if the object were present in the image of its own accord—as a *doppelgänger* or simulacrum. D. E. Wellbery provides a synopsis of these thoughts:

In simulacrum, representation, which in mimesis is transparency to an ideal spatial depth, gains its own density; the dead (or absent) object becomes living, achieves the status of a presence, though without entirely divesting its unreal character. Mimesis separates the actuality of the observer from the virtuality of the observed through the transparent but nonetheless rigorous differentiating boundary of the medium of representation. By contrast, in simulacrum, this boundary is condensed to an imposing presence that is neither simply real nor simply unreal (ideal)—it is condensed to a reality of representation, with an indissolubly ambiguous, often ghostly character.⁵³

This ghostly, neither real nor ideal effect of the presence of a phantom is termed “surrealist” by Marin.⁵⁴ However, it would be too simplistic to apply Marin’s considerations directly to Ernst’s pear still life and subsequently to his surrealist frottages. Too simplistic, because for Marin the simulacrum opposes the classical concept of representation, which was displaced in the romantic period at latest and certainly was no longer in effect as an opposing concept for the surrealist pictures. But some opposing concept is necessary, since phantoms are known to be secondary phenomena. Ernst’s surrealist simulacra are after-images of mimesis as it had functioned since the romantic period, and especially as it had served

as the ideal of art in the abstraction of artists such as Hans Arp (fig. 2). They are after-images of mimesis as the reenactment of nature through the materiality of the image.

The simulacral character of frottage expresses itself in and is strengthened through a thematic analogy: Natural History knows life-forms exclusively as fossils, and its mode of production generates exclusively fossil images. In the frottages, with their prehistoric image world, the artist's rubbing and imprinting technique imitates the processes of fossilization that take place inside the earth. It is critical that these mimetic analogies become visible not only as product, but also as process: Ernst not only assembles his leaves, trees, and birds from foreign textures; he allows these figures to grow out of the textures (leaf veins from nubs in leather) without causing the difference between them to vanish. In the completed image, there is a latent iconic excess that inheres in the wood, leather, and other materials or patterns. Thus, the viewer's seeing of resemblances can repeatedly give in to the fiction that it is reenacting the seeing of resemblances carried out by the artist, and that this seeing acts like fossilizing nature in generating images out of decomposing textures. The peculiar culmination of this processual analogy between the seeing of resemblances, artistic production, and fossilizing nature is that the mimetic verisimilitude is enhanced through an evident non-resemblance.⁵⁵ I am speaking of the difference in speed between deep-time processes and the rapid production of pictures using the rubbing procedure. In the Dada works, the exact opposite was the case: mimetic verisimilitude was called into question by the non-resemblance of sublime nature and small-scale bricolage. But now, the child's technique of rubbing, which can be accomplished in an instant, releases prehistoric nature. The sudden appearance of figures on a sheet of paper under the frotteur's busy hands is a simulacrum that grows out of mortified trees and leaves.

Both the Dada pictures and the surrealist frottages follow an anachronistic movement that underlies Ernst's artwork as a whole. They fossilize the imitation of nature or let it return after it has been destroyed through diagrams, cuts, and image readymades. As parodies of mimesis, however, they clearly differ in their degree of severity. The Dada pictures present a labyrinth of mimetisms that advances toward the dead point of serial-mechanical repetition, whereas the frottages generate mortification in order to glean from it a type of surrogate organicity. In the Dada pictures, the production-aesthetic parapraxes—extraneous

traces of ink, retouchings, thickenings of line—produce metaphoric condensations of natural process and artistic procedure. However, these never seal into a unity that organizes the picture. Instead, they are split into a double discontinuum: for one, between actual and simulated procedure (overpainting, diagram, collage); for another, between naturalistic and mechanical analogies of production (geologic layering, anatomical cross-section, superimposition of stage sets, stacking, stamping). In terms of the logic of production, this discontinuous formation of analogies refers to the mechanical-serial underlay: pictures that were made by overpainting wallpaper or diagrammatic pictures and grids reproduce the cuts of their underlay—in the procedural cuts of overpainting, collage, and diagram, and in the depicted cuts of geology, anatomy, mechanics, stacking, and the construction of sets.

In the frottages, by contrast, a naturalization of the cut can be observed—either through its immersion in rich textures (fig. 47) or through its function as the image boundary (fig. 23). As in the overpaintings, it is also possible to distinguish two image layers in the frottages. However, in the frottages there is an overall pulsating exchange between underlying textures and image effects (nubs in leather and leaves); and the underlay is no longer a serial-mechanical image readymade but consists of materials indicative of nature or natural processes (wood, leather, fabric, dried oil paint, etc.). The frottage transforms dead remains into a homogeneous texture and thus provokes an enlivening seeing of resemblances, which stimulates a spectral/hallucinatory growth in the mortified residue. This growth is supported by a close production-aesthetic metaphorics (frottage/fossilization) and a potent diaphorics (fast art/sublime slowness of nature). As simulacra, the frottages parody modernism's mimetic ideal—that what is demanded of the artist or the artist's works is an active re-creation of natural processes. The frottages bring into view a secondary growth, emaciated and mortified; the only growth that, after the distorting and cutting repetition of the Dada works, is still or is once again possible.

This surrealist afterlife of the imitation of nature, which follows upon the Dada pictures and originates in them, also transforms the illusionism of Ernst's works. In the Dada pictures of 1920–21, individual characteristics of traditional illusionism are in evidence, though in a prefabricated and distorted state. These include the neutral rectangular format, the perspective grid and the platform, materiality and weight—fossil remains of the conditions that in illusionism pro-

vided for the effect of sensory plenitude. In the Dada pictures, sensory plenitude is instead only evoked by the hard-to-locate textures of the underlay, confusing attempts at modeling (fig. 12), cuttngly sharp shadows (fig. 10), or disgusting details such as the erect intestine in *Stratified Rocks* (fig. 52). These attempts appear trapped in a remarkably dully painted, sensually deadened, rigid image world without tactile stimuli. By contrast, frottage, the technique of rubbing, brings the sense of touch back into play: textures and patterns appear through the interplay of pressure and resistance, soft graphite and hard ground. When the drawing paper is raised from the horizontal into the vertical, from the working surface into the frame, the tactile stimuli (wood grain, leather, fabric) transform into optical manifestations (sea swells, leaves, trees, animals, pupils; figs. 23, 24, 28–35). This metamorphosis of the seeing of resemblances releases the fossil world from its rigidity and animates the mortified spaces with the eerie afterlife of the imitation of nature. Illusion and imitation of nature, the visual and the tactile, form a unity again in the frottages. Nevertheless, this is a unity of the second degree, which comes out of a divide and glosses it over, in order to re-create what to the young Max Ernst in 1909 was still self-evident: the impressionist interplay of eye and hand.

According to Richard Shiff, the interplay of hand and eye in impressionism is based on the precondition that in the act of painting the body of the artist expresses the singularity that guides both eye and hand. The artist's idiosyncrasies are manifest the same way in both the gaze and in the brush.⁵⁶ In Ernst's frottages, the visual and the tactile likewise seem to form a unity: in the rubbing back and forth across a richly textural underlay, images arise that convey visually their origin in the sense of touch. The seeing of resemblances provides this mediation. It encounters a world that is not antecedent to perception but that takes form in perception's course: the wood grain begins to flow, the rough textile evokes an animate armor, or the leather pattern changes from the scaly bark of a prehistoric lepidodendron to the pulsating skin of a reptile (fig. 23). The world suddenly seems near, replete, and formable, in exchange with a tactile gaze that gives itself over to this world and makes the de-organicizing action of a fossil nature reversible. The precondition for this visual mediation of a tactile origin is the vanishing of tactile heterogeneity from the pictures. While the Dada pictures place gouache next to photography, pencil next to woodcut, stamping next to a dull area of

paint, the surface of the frottages seals itself in seamless homogeneity and is additionally unified through the reproduction procedure of heliogravure.

However, the unity of hand and eye is also divided—or, more precisely, it remains palpable that the mediation of this unity plays upon a divide. In the impressionist ideal of production, the brush reacts spontaneously to the seen; and the ephemeral nature of the seen—the surfaces of a body of water, trees and fields in the wind, atmospheric phenomena, and above all the play of light—corresponds to the spontaneous traces of the brush. This continuous interplay of image and nature, oil paint and light, is interrupted in frottage. The hand rubs textures that lie underneath the paper and thus are withdrawn from the eye. Only after the fact does this tactility come into connection with the seen. The sensory plenitude of frottage, its connection of the visible with the graspable, the eye with the hand, plays upon a dissociation grounded in the procedure. This dissociation was often demonstrated in the Dada pictures: procedures such as stamping, reprinting, or overpainting are radical negations of the impressionist ideal according to which a body, unified on the basis of its idiosyncrasies, comes into expression. The frottages are images of a divided and deferred, parodistic rescue. What Ernst in 1909 was seeking outside in nature leads a ghostly afterlife in his surrealist natural history.

NATURAL HISTORY IN SERVICE TO THE SURREALIST REVOLUTION

Frottage came into being as the answer to automatic writing (*écriture automatique*),¹ which itself was the foundation myth of surrealism.² Automatic writing is a literary practice directed toward the social totality and utopia that Lautréamont famously demanded: “Poetry should be made by all. Not by one.”³ As an expression of the “actual functioning of thought” and simultaneously an “unrestricted language,”⁴ automatic writing claims to be a perfect communication in which the “I” is dissolved and individual understanding disabled. In their supposed absence, a dark power, conceived with and against Freud as the unconscious, talks to and speaks for itself. Automatic texts,⁵ which comprise only a small percentage of the bodies of work of the individual poets, are thus granted less significance in surrealism than is automatism as a practice. The origin of the surrealist revolution lies in the performance of automatic writing as the individual rehearsal of an unconscious communication that would prove its social efficacy in the surrealist group as a whole, by first constituting it as such. However, as the history of the surrealist movement demonstrates, the origin of the surrealist revolution also proves to be the surrogate of action. The various disappointments that André Breton and his followers suffered in contact with political revolutionaries repeatedly led them back to automatism, which demanded not agitation and organization, but sleep, idleness, and the absence of any goal.⁶

In determining the relationship of frottage to automatic writing, the “communal purpose”⁷ of the foundation myth should not fall out of view. Before I turn to the question of how Max Ernst placed his *Natural History* in service to the surrealist revolution, it is necessary to discuss in greater detail the problems and particularities of the production and contextualization of automatic images. The tension characteristic of the surrealists’ social performance—the status of automatic writing as both origin and surrogate of action—is conspicuous in the surrealists’ poetics, both in formulation in manifestos and in execution in liter-



FIGURE 25

Max Ernst, *Lesson in Automatic Writing (Leçon d'écriture automatique)*, 1924. 17.3 × 169 cm, pen and ink on paper. Private collection (S/M no. 564). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

ary texts and images. This tension gives form to the controversy surrounding the possibility of an automatic visual art.

ORIGIN AND DOCUMENT

With the frottages, Max Ernst succeeded in achieving what his surrealist friends would recognize as his first contribution to a genuine visual automatism, and with the grattages of the following year, he was able to repeat this success in oil painting. In 1924 he had tried something completely different: with a quick and careless stroke, he had drawn various enigmatic motifs on a roll of paper, supposedly analogous to the continuity of the automatic stream of images (fig. 25).⁸ In this way, he dynamized the pictorial concept that governed his oil paintings between 1921 and 1924: the naive, artful/artless portrayal not of objects, but of prefabricated images. *Oedipus Rex* (figs. 13, 14) is a picture of a picture because it is based on a collage of wood engravings.⁹ More importantly, it is a picture of a picture because the viewer, who generally doesn't know what it is based on, believes that he or she is witnessing the déjà vu of a preceding, mental image.¹⁰ As influential as the secondary character of Ernst's pictures was for surrealism in its emergence between 1921 and 1924, after the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (*Manifeste du surréalisme*; 1924), his poet friends expected a new art. The paper roll was not to be granted a future as the supporting medium of automatism. Besides, the arrival onto the scene of André Masson promised a new beginning beyond the secondary painting of artists such as de Chirico or Ernst.

These expectations for visual art were articulated in a controversy that erupted following the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1924.¹¹ Concerning the question of whether there was such a thing as automatic painting, the dispute was set off by Breton's having nothing to say about it. After important essays in previous years on Ernst, de Chirico, Picabia, and André Derain in which Breton had stressed the centrality of painting to the avant-garde, in the *Manifesto* he afforded the medium only two footnotes. His mistrust of painting was of an ethical nature—who could be of any use as a revolutionary after having experienced success in the art market?¹²—but it also implied a theoretical problem. Painting made a question obvious that the poet had glossed over in his declarations: the question of the medium of the unconscious. How can one ever be sure that the inherent effects of a particular medium do not distort or completely occlude the messages of the unconscious? How can it be guaranteed that in sentences received as the direct precipitate of the unconscious, it is not actually just the material of language that is speaking?¹³

One way to dispel doubts about the transparency of language is to thematize these doubts using the example of another medium—that is, painting. In the *Manifesto*, Breton advises that during half sleep, as surrealist images appear on the surface of consciousness, their outlines should simply be traced.¹⁴ This mechanical tracing of outlines (*calquer*) is preferable to drawing because it disables the practiced conventions of the hand and the interaction with the controlling eye. The traditional culture of drawing was suspected of pre-forming the expressions of the unconscious. The uncoupling of eye and hand, censoring consciousness and executing instrument, thus became the main concern of early surrealist discussions of painting. In the first edition of *La Révolution surréaliste* (December 1924), Max Morise explicitly polemicizes against the traditional skill that falsifies the images of the unconscious. As an alternative, he calls for mechanical documentation and cites Man Ray's photograms as an example.¹⁵

Outlines like those that Breton recommends and photochemical imprints are both indexical images. Their causal relationship to the represented guarantees their documentary reliability. However, Morise goes beyond Breton, since his interest in the photogram is based implicitly on its difference from the outline. Both types of image are traces. But while Breton's outline records a mental image that already has all the qualities of a surrealist image, the photogram is a material image that possesses all surrealist qualities in itself. The outline is a mechanical

and thus reliable materialization of an original mental image, which is the real object of interest. The photogram is likewise a reliable documentary trace, but as a trace it simultaneously is the original surrealist image and does not refer to any pre-photographic, mental image. In other words, in the photogram it is possible to lay claim to two diverging types of authenticity: that of the documentary imprint and that of the originary, ideal image. The particular credibility of outlines, imprints, traces, and other indexical images as testaments to objects, events, or other images is commandeered by the photogram for an image that exists only as the photogram, without reference to anything preceding it. The surrealist photogram thrives on the credibility of a document produced through a mechanical procedure and is simultaneously the source where the image first appears. It testifies to the past (the past presence of the thing whose trace it documents) and simultaneously is the image of a present moment as it unfolds.

What are the consequences for painting and drawing? Morise does not discuss this point explicitly, but it can be deduced from his text that he does not grant them the paradoxical unity of being both the document and source of the surrealist image. They remain either pure document or pure source. For documentation, a “quick and rough drawing” suffices to fix mental images. This possibility offers only a mediated access to the treasures of the unconscious. As opposed to this split between automatic expression as mental event and the registering of this event, Morise devises another, better option, which he calls “a real Surrealist procedure”: “Forms and colors free themselves from objects and organize themselves according to a law that evades any premeditation, a law that is at once made and unmade when it emerges.”¹⁶

The first, worse option—the “quick and rough drawing”—was in evidence in Ernst’s most recent foray, the roll of paper with its image notations that refer to a stream of mental images. Morise had had the chance to see these works in September 1924 at surrealist headquarters; plainly, he did not consider them a challenge for Masson, the painter who in 1924 embodied the future of surrealist painting. One of Masson’s drawings was used as an illustration for Morise’s essay. These drawings, called “automatic,” present what is lauded as the “real Surrealist procedure”: the separation of forms and colors from the object, and their commitment to a principle that comes into and goes out of operation to the same extent that it is expressed. In the year of the *Manifesto*, the surrealists, who polemicized against any kind of artistry, be it the poet’s “main à plume”¹⁷ or the

painter's *métier*, put their trust in the hand of a virtuosic draftsman. Morise's statement expresses a pronouncedly modernist rejection of secondary images, combined with the requisite demand that the painter invent a medium in which the unconscious can precipitate directly. Morise thus presents painting with the alternatives of making either secondary documents of the surrealist image or original surrealist images. Apart from painting, in the photogram he recognizes a third possibility that paradoxically unifies both forms of authenticity, the original form of the ideal image and the secondary form of the document.

With *frottage* (and later with *grattage*), Ernst attempted to avail himself of the merits of the photogram and transfer these into a technique of drawing (or painting). As an infantile mechanism through which images seem to appear of their own accord, *frottage* evokes an automatic originality and spontaneity of image production. As an indexical imprinting procedure, it always makes the claim of objective reproduction unfalsified by artistic convention.

It could be asked, objective reproduction of what? In archaeology and paleontology, *frottage* is used for the documentation of remains. In Ernst's pictures, not only remains but also the images arising from them—not only the past, but also the unfolding present of an eerie growth—take on the value of the documentary. But this growth, produced by the originality of the image within the entirely secondary world of *frottage*, is only achieved in the imaginative perception of the viewer. In the seeing of resemblances, the surrealists were able to recognize the “actual functioning of thought” at work.¹⁸ Thus, Ernst's medium made a three-fold promise: to record faithful documents of automatic images, to visualize the spontaneity and originality of these images, and to experience this visualization as an effect not of the medium, but of psychic processes.

In what follows, through a discussion of other topics relevant to surrealist art, from the paradigm of the written to automatism's social aspect, it will be shown how Ernst appropriated the poetics of automatic writing in *Natural History*. In modernism, it was rather extraordinary that a visual artist should attempt to partake in the foundation myth of what at first was a purely textual activity. In fact, the most important artistic positions from impressionism to cubism made themselves out to be actively anti-literary.¹⁹ Ernst, who made many of his best works in other media, surely had his own reasons for preferring the literary illustrations of Max Klinger or Odilon Redon over pure painting. At the same time, however, surrealism—in distinguishing itself with great firmness from “merely

literary” movements and thus condemning any formalism, whether in poetry or painting—offered the possibility of a new form of *ut pictura poesis*. It proclaimed a shared foundation myth, the activity of automatism, which was intended to be rehearsed in pictures and texts, but not to be confined to them. Performance and rehearsal require a stage. Unlike acting out, they are skilled at staging a scene, a skill that never conceals itself, even as it keeps other artifices from view. According to everything that can be observed about Ernst’s working method—and in light of his virtuosic use of many different procedures and the way he metaphorizes, disguises, and thematizes them—it is no wonder that his appropriation of automatic writing was often carried out as the staging of a scene—as the theatricization both of automatic effects and of the paradoxes that result from the tension, characteristic for automatic writing, between original and document, source and surrogate.

AUTOMATISM AND THE WRITTEN

Max Ernst’s *Natural History* repeatedly tempts the viewer to place its images into a rich intellectual-historical frame studded with fragments from many learned places, from *Ars combinatoria* to Novalis to psychoanalysis.²⁰ The surrealists were themselves the first to construct wide-ranging contextual fields and become intoxicated with the historical overtones of their iconography. In the following, I would like to discuss the influential topos of the writing of nature—not to join in the game of surrealist erudition, but to demonstrate its relevance for the production of *Natural History*. As in the chapter on mimesis, here again it is helpful to discuss the frottages’ relationship to nature in contrast to that of Ernst’s Dada pictures.

In 1920 several works were made using rubbing.²¹ In *Typescript Manifesto* (*Typoskript-Manifest*), written together with Johannes Theodor Baargeld, Ernst included a frottaged coin (fig. 26). The two Dadaists assembled a catalog of different reproduction techniques (traced letters, test prints of commercial intaglio plates, steel engraving, photography, and typewriting), to which frottages were also added. However, typewriting was definitive. Language disintegrates when the keys and roller have free play. More than the repeated characters, the carriage returns, and the letters that have been struck with excessive vigor, one’s attention is held by a strip without any type that cuts sharply through the text, produced

FIGURE 26
Max Ernst,
*Typescript
Manifesto*
(*Typoskript-
Manifest*),
1920. 28.5
× 22.5 cm,
collage and
frottage on
paper. Private
collection
(S/M no. 335).
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(ARS), New
York / ADAGP,
Paris.



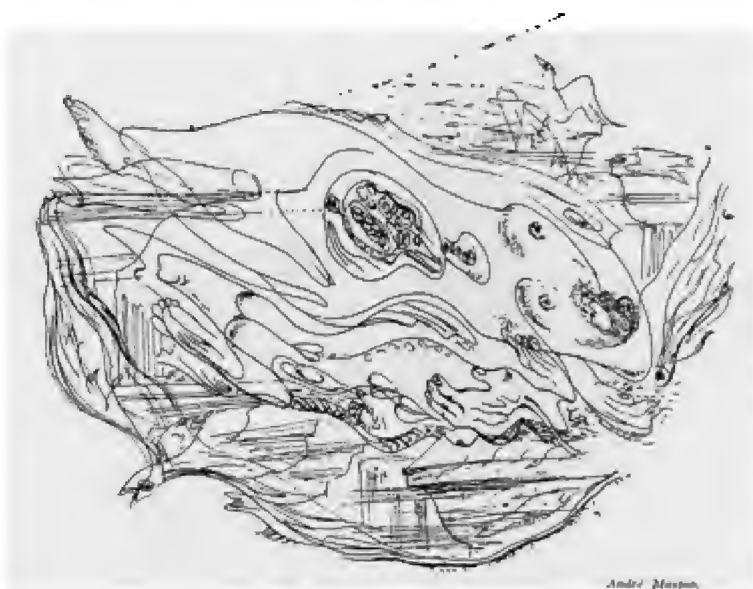
by a fold in the paper when it was pressed together by the roller. In this strip, an invisible zone expands and rises to the surface of the pictorial field. This invisibility is constitutive for writing with the typewriter, since the exact place being marked remains hidden from view.²² The little frottage in the margin exemplifies another printing technique, which, like the typewriter, separates the eye from the hand in a similar way. Like typing, the mechanical hatching makes something visible that is hidden by the apparatus. The sign appears exactly in the shadow of the conditions of production, within the blind spot that, in typing or frottage, prevents the interplay of eye and hand.

In 1920, during the Dada years, Ernst made an analogy between frottage and typing. In *Typescript Manifesto*, typewriting is the paradigm of an uncoupled production mode that takes place in the shadow of the apparatus. In contrast to the automatic writing of the surrealists, this automatism does not allow any glimpse of liberation. The uncoupling of eye and hand is not, as later in surrealism, a precautionary measure for the protection of an originary spontaneity that could be restricted by the censorship of the reviewing gaze. Instead, it is the effect of an apparatus that compels mechanical repetition without any origin. If typewriting is the paradigm of Dadaist writing, then Dadaist nature must also be a user of discrete and efficiently repeatable signs. This is the real point of the overpainting *Frozen Landscapes* (plate 1). In the first chapter, it was demonstrated how this picture stages its own production as reproduction: in the hatching, the rock strata, the machine, and finally also the stamp marks, the same principle of mechanical repetition is expressed that produced the wallpaper pattern of the pictorial underlay. But until this time, it has gone unmentioned that *Frozen Landscapes* depicts a communication machine. This is evident in the large telegraph pole to the right, and its small offspring to the left side of the picture. The stamp marks would then be the regressive collapse of Morse code or the babbling of discrete and efficiently repeatable elementary signs. It stands to reason that a nature that produces landscapes that in turn reproduce the structure of wallpaper would also write in serial signs, or in the ruins of them. And it likewise follows that the body correlative to this nature would be broken down in strata. The complete title of the work is *Frozen Landscapes, Icicles and Mineral Types of the Female Body* (*eislandschaften, eiszapfen und gesteinsarten des weiblichen körpers*). This title suggests that a picture that destructively stages its own (re)production also destroys that which in the romantic tradition is understood as the origin of artistic subjectiv-

ity: nature as a female body. By making himself into a machine and stamping his picture, the artist is mocking the fact that the trace of the brush was once understood as an expression of artistic subjectivity. His facture is not his at all; it is a testament neither to artistic mastery nor to a unique, natural sensibility, but instead is the destroyed code of a nature, or a woman, which it- or herself is a deconstructable body composed of discrete layers.

The break between Dada and surrealism as described in the first chapter is particularly clear in view of the written quality of Ernst's pictures. In *Typescript Manifesto*, frottage is made analogous to typewriting. The uncoupling of eye and hand that takes place in the shadow of the apparatus is the commonality of the two printing procedures. When Ernst begins to test frottage as an artistic technique—in the Dada works, frottage only provides a sample for the catalog of different mechanical procedures—he becomes particularly interested in the qualities that make it different from typewriting, with a primary difference being the temporality of frottage. Whereas typewriter letters hurtle toward the page with the greatest possible speed, frottaged signs appear gradually. The typewriter is a radically spatialized medium; frottage takes time. And more importantly, in the frottages, and particularly in the prints of *Natural History*, this temporality has not yet come to rest. It is always being punctuated by the seeing of new resemblances. In this way, the frottages achieve their genuine ambiguity as imprints and simultaneously as images that are constantly showing their ghostly emergence in a new way.

Ernst's surrealism emerges in the distance that separates frottage from the Dadaist paradigm of mechanical writing.²³ Does his art thus definitively remove itself from a poetics of the written? Following the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, the debate in the surrealist group about the position of painting particularly concerned the ideal of automatic writing. The written record was considered the ideal, because the most transparent, medium for the unconscious flow of images. With his drawings, Masson furnished evidence that the tools of the surrealist poet—pen, ink, paper—would also produce an automatic visual art (fig. 27). The virtuosic animation and aggression of his stroke could be interpreted as the return to writing's unconscious origin in a blind scrawl. Automatic drawing liquefies writing, transforms it from a medium of representation into a fluid substance of the unconscious. This liquid metaphors dominates the morphology and motifs of Masson's drawings, which often present the flooding and



André Masson.

La revendication du plaisir

Le cristal, les veines du bois et de la lumière, et la lumière même des alcools nécessaires à une existence prophétique, les musiques trop légères pour que nous les maudissions, les étoiles achetées à des prix dérisoires, les perles nées des jeux de l'air avec la peau des femmes, toutes ces exigences font la moelle de nos sens, ce ruisseau où nous déversons le sang pur des rêves.

Nous n'aimons que la neige et le feu, les tourmentes glacées du pôle, les victimes encore chaudes de l'espoir, les arêtes vives de flammes ou d'eau qui rongent notre ossature. Nous n'aimons que la neige et le feu de la chair, vraie densité de notre esprit. Le cours des astres dirige nos pas comme ces battements fiévreux d'artères quand un regard ou un breuvage parvient nos yeux d'aiguilles.

Les belles couleurs nous charment. Il en est qui sont pareilles aux multiples yeux de l'amour, au reflet du crime sur la lame d'un couteau, aux pas d'une vierge impure sur le miroir étrange de la mémoire. Ces couleurs, nous en parons la citadelle de nos membres, quand nos mains voudraient être des faux ou des coups de feu. Nous les bras-

sons avec notre esprit boursoffé d'amertume, nous les serrons dans nos bras après les moments d'ivresse. Nous les bouleversons pour établir des barricades, afin d'empoisonner l'air avec notre éternité. Entre les pôles de la lumière et de l'obscurité, les larmes jaunes de la vie préparent les couleurs de la mort.

Il n'y a que les couleurs tragiques, celles qui se lovent comme les serpents entre les flanes de l'atmosphère. Il n'y a, disons-nous, que ces pigments solaires qui puissent nous prendre, sang et eau. Lorsque les rues sont la proie de l'électricité, toutes les annonces rapaces nous attirent. Nous devenons phosphorescents, et ce n'est pas la kipe. Pour ne pas leur faire honte nous tentons de porter des vêtements idéaux. Nous regardons bien en face les aphyx à tête d'épingles. Nous déjouons les complots des banquiers enfermés dans leur Bourse maussade, ceux-là qui ne voient l'avenir que pour les besoins croupis de leurs Marchés et qui se permettent d'insulter la face du ciel au nom de leur richesse d'ordure. Prairie mouvante et molle où tous les reptiles sont tapis, nous te défilons ! Nos pas sont assez purs pour échapper à tes traquenards. Nos fronts sont assez hauts pour émerger même si nous sommes engloutis et nos chevelures

FIGURE 27

André
Masson,
*Automatic
Drawing*
(*Dessin
automatique*),
from *La
Révolution
surréaliste*,
1925. © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

destruction of architectural elements, as though architecture were the symbol of the established culture that opposes the unbounded stream of automatism.²⁴ That the topos of the writing of nature assumes a distanced, semiotically mediated relationship to nature is glossed over in the metaphors of drifting, submersion, and deliquescence. To read this nature is to get lost in it.

The seductive power of the fluid continues to be felt in autobiographical retrospect. After the war, Masson would write that for the graphic expression of psychic automatism, only the following is needed: materially, paper and ink; psychically, inner emptiness, from which the automatic signs emerge “like an unforeseeable birth.”²⁵ The white sheet of paper and the empty consciousness, the ink and the dark origin of unconscious images—Masson’s drawing is intended to be understood as the writing of an inner nature, whose element is a dark and restless sea contaminated with all manner of flotsam.

In the frottages, another nature is writing, with other instruments. It does not employ the typewriter, as it does in the Dada pictures, or ink, whose opaque depths it assumes in Masson’s drawings. It makes do with a relatively limited number of elements in its alphabet. (The various textures can be termed an “alphabet” because Ernst only needed a limited number of them to produce more than 130 frottages in 1925.) Leather, straw mats, wood grain, dried oil paint, a diamond pattern, a star pattern, and twine comprise the hieroglyphs in which *Natural History* is written. While Masson recorded the writing of a nature not yet divided into discrete signs, the frottages are constructed out of a mortifying writing. Their elements become written characters because they are the death masks of objects. Only the mortification of the imprint makes the pieces of wood or twine into the repeatable, movable, combinable letters of natural history.²⁶ At the same time, as has already been emphasized, this mortification preserves a growth that constantly reappears as a simulacrum in the viewer’s seeing of resemblances.

Ernst’s ghost-writing of nature, achieved through mortification and vivid as a death mask, is characteristic of the surrealist depletion of the traditional topos. Breton, too, only knows the writing of nature as a simulacrum, as is demonstrated in an automatic text published in 1924 in *Soluble Fish* (*Poisson soluble*). At the beginning of the text, it is observed that the ground is an unfolded newspaper and that even the flowers smell like printers’ ink.²⁷ Two sections later, Breton discovers at the bottom edge of the newspaper’s fourth page a curious fold with

traces of rust from a metallic object. An imprint in a newspaper is the meeting of two surrogates that present the real world, the world of objects and events, as past and absent. The surrealist hope is precisely that reality's surrogate creations will make space for those desires that are unfulfilled in reality. Thus Breton devotes himself to interpreting the stains that bear witness to the past encounter of a newspaper and a metal object, and, by means of the imaginative seeing of resemblances, discovers in them surrealist figures. They are metonymies of the fantastic and of love: the rust stain resembles a forest (the romantic topos of the fantastic *par excellence*), while the object that left the stain may have been part of an Empire bed.²⁸ To the Surrealists, the world of surrogates gives intimations of a hopeful future. Nature is an old, stained newspaper, but in the traces of rust, a forest of love is thriving.²⁹

At once imprint and origin, at once the ruin writing of nature and nature's afterlife—in his frottages, Ernst takes up these contradictions of automatic writing and transforms them into pictorial effects. He not only assimilates the explicitly formulated directives that the poets attempted to give to the painters; more importantly, he reacts to automatic writing as it was practiced, for example, as documented in *Soluble Fish*. The problems of the new poetics that are glossed over or pushed aside as the special problems of surrealist painting in the *Manifesto* are embraced and embellished through narrative or allegory in these automatic texts. Is automatic writing the notation or actualization of the unconscious flow of images? Is it document or origin, surrogate or inspired testimony? In *Soluble Fish*, this aporia is negotiated similarly as in the frottages. In a world of mechanical surrogate creations, a world that is nothing more than an “enormous unfolded newspaper” where “sometimes a photograph comes by” and where the trees are headline type, the imaginative seeing of resemblances allows the blossoming of surrealist images of love and the fantastic.

SURREALIST IMAGE AND AUTOMATIC SERIES

So that the signs of this new surreality can show themselves, the old reality must first be fossilized. The distinction between sign and thing, as it hardens into a surface, also begins to crack. Sign and thing cross through one another on the same mortified surface, since the signs (the printed letters of a newspaper, the imprint of an unknown object) are simultaneously the objects that comprise

the world of the surrogate. There is also a penetration of these different levels in Max Ernst's frottages. The leather texture in print 17, the wood fiber in print 1, and the diamond pattern in print 7, with their characteristic instability, are both the means and the motif of representation. In the first image of *Natural History* (fig. 29), it is a picture within a picture that inserts the world of signs into the world of objects. The slight foreshortening of its edges locates it within the stormy landscape, though it is clearly set off from this landscape as an independent image. In *Caesar's Palette* (*La palette de César*; fig. 28), the leaf appears twice, once as a frottaged impression that lies on top of a rectangular field, and once as a gap through which the paper ground tears a hole in the pictorial world.³⁰ Likewise, what belongs within the pictorial fiction and what should be counted among the conditions of its possibility cannot be determined. This indecision as to whether a white gap should be perceived literally as a piece of the material ground or metaphorically as an opening in a visual/transparent world can be compared with the quality of automatic writings termed by Laurent Jenny as their "open" or "undecidable figurativity." One consequence of the audacious metaphors of surrealist texts is the breaking down of the distinction between literal and figurative meaning. If a metaphoric relationship can be established between anything and anything else, then it is no longer possible to decide where the literal level enters into a text. Automatic writings cancel the "rhetorical contract" that makes significant deviations—and thus figurativity—articulable.³¹ Are we perceiving (fig. 23) a plant with a snakeskin or a dissembling resemblance between leather nubs and leaves? It cannot be decided.

On an iconic level, the interpenetration of representation and the means of representation corresponds to an opening of the borders that divide nature into kingdoms. In 1927 Breton would write in *Surrealism and Painting* (*Le surréalisme et la peinture*) that the notion of the three kingdoms of nature is "the height of absurdity." As evidence, he cites the phenomenon of mimicry.³² Like the insect that lands on a branch in the form of an animal and flies away again in the form of a leaf, the leather nubs that grow into a leaf and a tree in print 17 (fig. 23) also gloss over the difference between the plant and animal kingdoms. Frottage is thus enriched by a contradiction: not only is it simultaneously document and presence, ruin writing and haunting growth; its medium of representation and pictorial motif also penetrate each other—and in turn, this penetration of sign

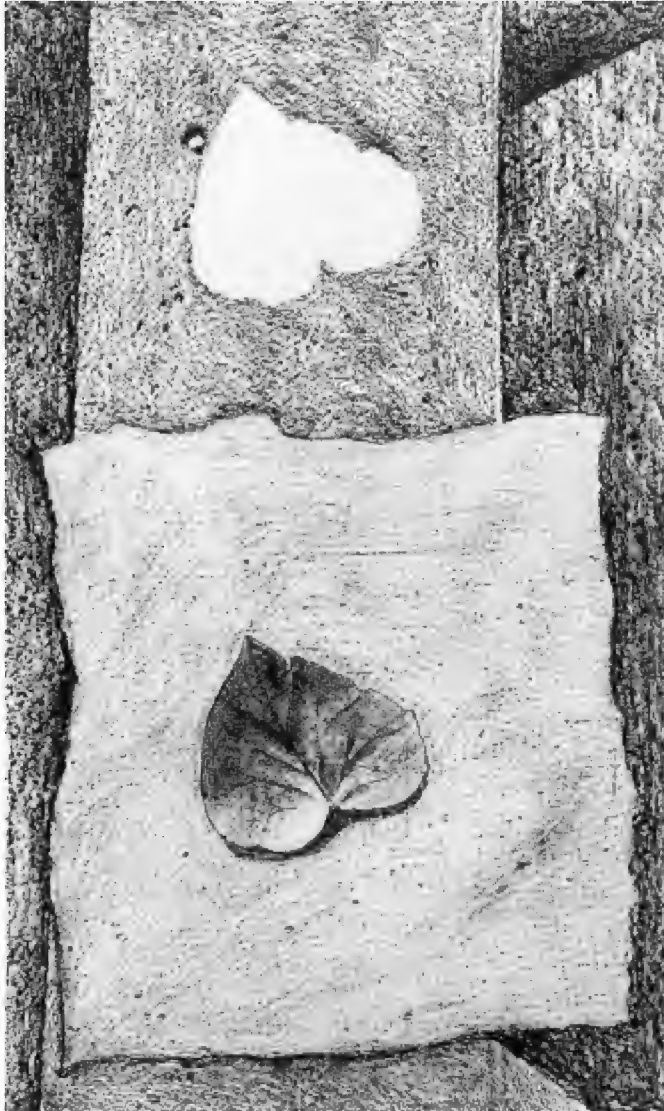


FIGURE 28

Max Ernst, *Caesar's Palette*
(*La palette de César*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 20), 1925/26. 43 × 26 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 809). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

and signified corresponds on an iconographic level to the interpenetrability of the kingdoms of nature.

In the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton famously describes an experience in which he entered into a hypnagogic mind state. First, he was visited by the image of a man “cut in two by a window,” which is obviously an allegory of the surrealist penetration of representations (such as the image of a man) by their own frame (the window).³³ However, such a representation fragmented by its own conditions can only count as automatic if it generates a series of new images. With regard to Ernst’s *Natural History*, the question arises as to why a picture series committed to the ideal of unconscious production tells the story of a pre-human nature. Automatic writing opens up the present to the prehistoric deep time of the unconscious, out of which grow the “inadmissible flora and fauna” that Breton hoped to encounter on his expeditions into the primordial forest of automatism.³⁴ Surrealist texts in fact abound with monstrous/seductive dragonflies, traditional or invented hybrid creatures such as the “lyre bird” and the “rain bird,” modern sphinxes stationed between prehistoric ferns. Creatures that confound traditional classifications of nature or cross the boundaries to human culture embody the audacious metaphors of surrealism—the necessary encounter of the most dissimilar things in the intersection of representation and its preconditions.³⁵ For this reason, the programmatic invocation of a new nature is one of the customary incantation formulas of an avant-garde flirting with the Orphic power of the word. Looking back at Breton’s first attempts at automatic writing, Louis Aragon sees his friend posing as a fantastic hunter who exhibits his prey, a “reinvented zoology, a reinvented botany.”³⁶ The fascination with a deep time that allows new genera and species to emerge is accompanied by the desire for an unspeakable nature unseen by human eyes, which, in its prehistoric alienness, prefigures the future of the surrealist revolution.

This use of natural history to exhibit their own eloquence could be read as evidence that the surrealists only knew nature as an available material.³⁷ However, this is not the case for either Breton or Aragon. Breton’s digressions into natural philosophy attempted to demonstrate that the writing of nature also proceeds according to automatism and that surrealism was thus grounded in an ordinary unity of subject and nature, which could be regained.³⁸ In *Paris Peasant* (*Le Paysan de Paris*), Aragon proposed a grounding of surrealism in transcendental philosophy: Nature is not a circumstantial given; it is a subjective construction,

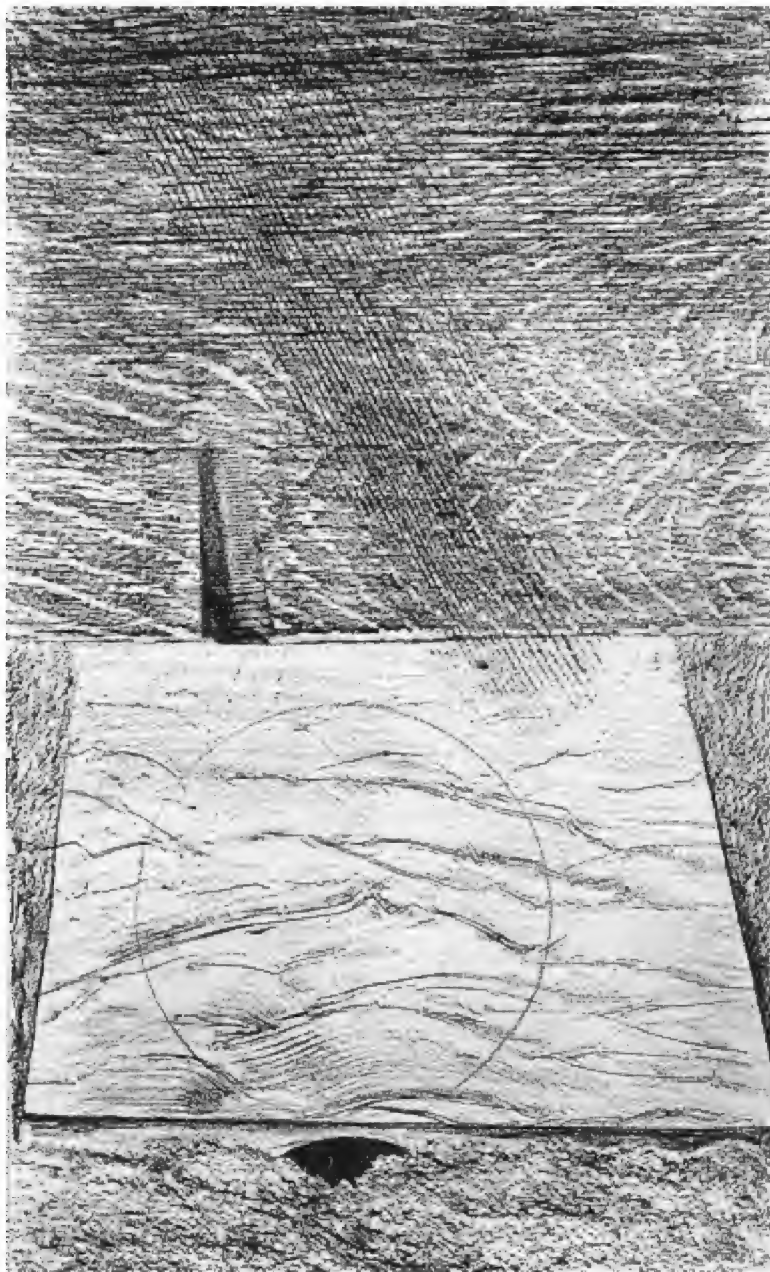
though its implications and consequences remain unknown to the empirical subject. Thus, nature is the subject's unconscious, which only reveals itself at "rare thresholds."³⁹ In his writings (which I will discuss in some detail in chapter 3), Ernst provides a psychoanalytic explanation for how it is that natural history simultaneously recounts the history of the subject. In what follows, I would like to present some of the guiding principles of surrealist prehistory. These can be particularly well studied in transitions similar to the "rare thresholds" that, according to Aragon, signify the unconscious: that is, in transitions between the image and its conditions.

At the beginning of surrealist natural history a storm is raging. *The Sea and Rain* (*La mer et la pluie*; fig. 29) is the title of the first print. Sea and rain belong to the repertoire of automatic writing. "Precipitates" ("Les Précipités") was Breton's original title for the foundational text that he later decided to call *The Magnetic Fields* (*Les Champs magnétiques*).⁴⁰ In *Soluble Fish*, the first line of the central text is "La pluie est divin" (rain is divine). The precipitate of the new language gathers in the passive hand of the poet.⁴¹ Likewise, the motif of rain at the beginning of the frottaged natural history announces the self-authorizing appearance of its images: where rain pours down on the sea, it strikes a picture within a picture. In turn, this picture represents a surging sea. Its waves are more clearly defined than those in the larger sea, whose congealed, large-grained mass surrounds the picture within a picture and is liquefied within it. Thus, in the place where the rain pours down, there is an image (within an image) and the hardened sea begins to move again. Probably the appearance of the circle can also be attributed to the effects of the miraculous rain. It is drawn directly beneath the rain shower in the interior picture. Unlike the foreshortened picture within a picture, the circle has been drawn frontally. It seems as if it has risen from the swells (this impression is strengthened by the fact that the circle has not been completed at the bottom).

Surely, this visionary circle in the originary cosmic storm would have been allocated a deeper meaning, since Ernst's friend Paul Éluard was interested in emblem books.⁴² The circle directs the gaze to the center of the interior picture. In fact, near the circle's center point, one notices the obviously retouched, many times repeated line of a wave, which traverses the entire diameter of the circle from left to right. Here, in the ground, a still formless image is stirring—perhaps a descendant of the "soluble fish" that Breton designated as his emblem in the *Manifesto*.⁴³ The mystery of the emblematic circle is analogous to the enigma of

FIGURE 29

Max Ernst, *The Sea and Rain* (*La mer et la pluie*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 1), 1925/26. 43 × 26.5 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 790).
© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



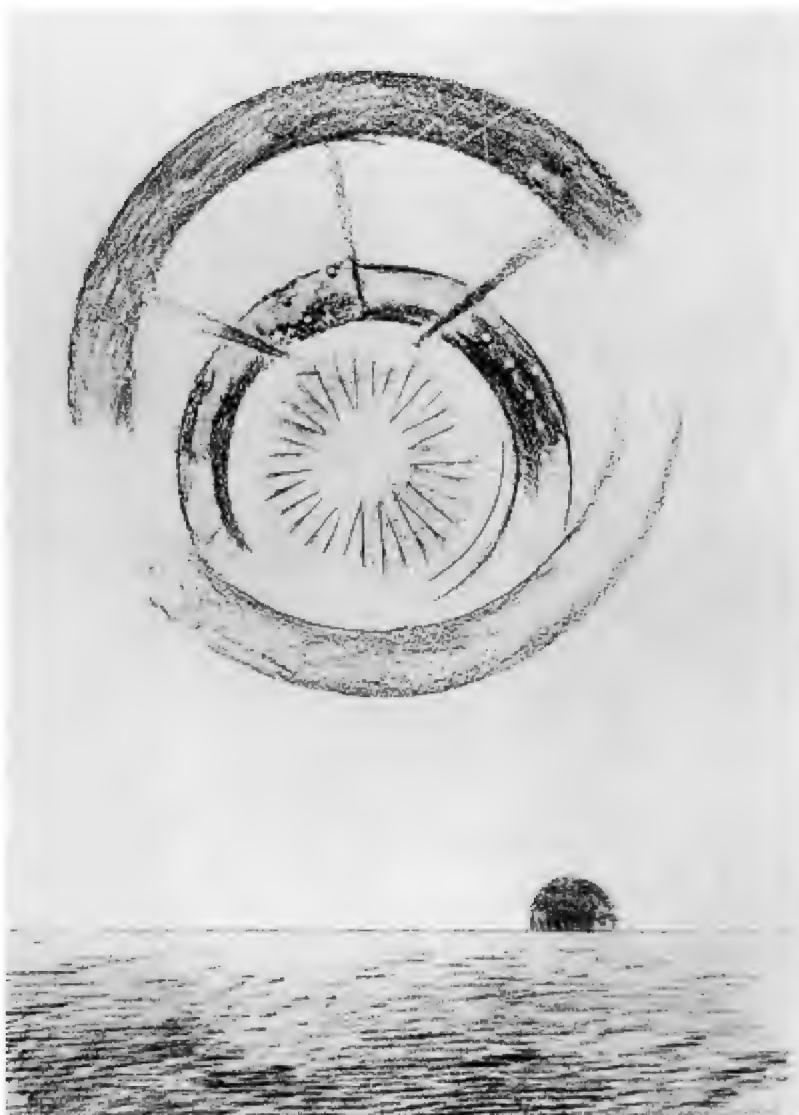
frottage, its latent iconic potential. Ernst uses frottage as a technique of the enigmatic, the concealment and simultaneously the indexing of what is concealed, the absent underlay and its obscure trace, in which the seeing of resemblances occasionally discovers hidden images.

Natural history begins with an arcanum. But how does the cryptogram of the circle mark the beginning of natural history? Formally, it leads to the second print (fig. 30). Maybe the connection to the rising sun is also meteorologically motivated. The sun of the second print shines through the storm of the first and projects a rainbow that rises from the picture within a picture. Natural history begins in the second picture's reverberation within the interior picture of the first picture. Like Breton's ideal image of automatic writing (the man cut in two by the window), this beginning arises from the interpenetration of representation and the represented world: the sun's effect extends beyond the frame of the picture into the interior picture of the picture preceding it.

As this retroaction of the second print upon the first print demonstrates, from its inception, the movement of surrealist natural history is complicated by regressive moments. It does progress according to the familiar narrative schema, from originary storm to the different kingdoms of plants and animals to the first people (fig. 33). However, its procedure relates each stage of development to the relatively small textural repertoire that comprises the mortified and unchanging ground of *Natural History*.⁴⁴ Just one example of how the procedure's tendency toward nonsimultaneity is manifest in iconography can be found in the eleventh print, *Whip Lashes or Lava Threads (Coups de fouet ou ficelles de lave; fig. 31)*. This print occupies the caesura in natural history between the first plants (prints 6–10), which grow all alone in an endless expanse, and zoomorphic leaf creatures (prints 12–14), which form aggressive communities. Between these, print 11 shows a stone block with fossil traces. The initial tendency is to attribute them to a plant species, before one discovers, hidden in them as within a reversible image, the skeletons of two birds frozen at the climax of a wild fight. This picture between two kingdoms of nature documents a stage in natural history that is only to be reached in the far future—the kingdom of birds, which begins in print 25. In order to move from the solitary and peaceful plants to the zoomorphic and aggressive ones, the surrealist natural history utilizes a picture within a picture in which fully developed animal life is already recorded. The caesura between

FIGURE 30

Max Ernst, *A Glance*
(*Un coup d'œil*)
(*Histoire naturelle*,
print 2), 1925/
26. 41.1 × 26.3 cm
(measurement
of image),
photoengraving from
frottage (S/M no.
791). © 2012 Artists
Rights Society (ARS),
New York / ADAGP,
Paris.



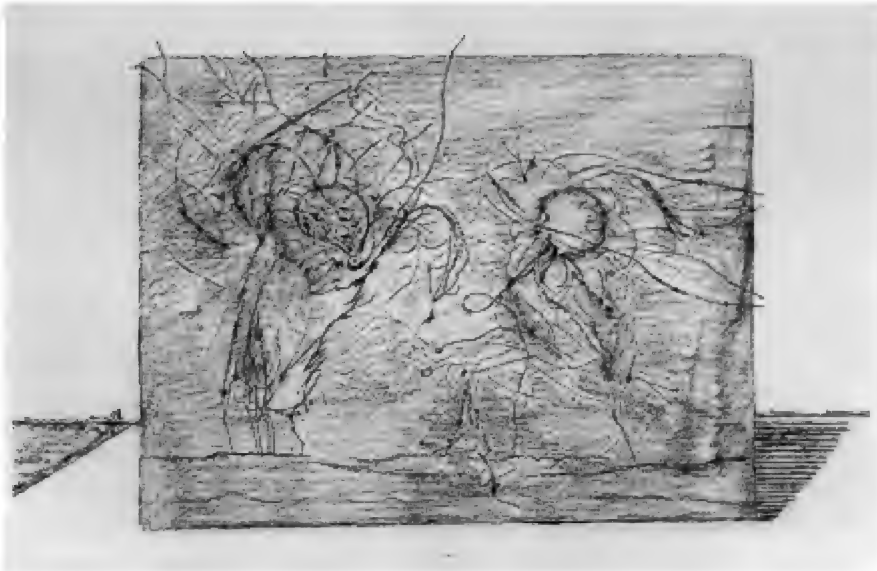


FIGURE 31

Max Ernst, *Whip Lashes or Lava Threads* (*Coups de fouet ou ficelles de lave*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 11), 1925/26. 27 × 42.5 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 800). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

the plant and animal kingdoms is likewise marked by nonsimultaneity, with the bread fossil in print 23, which points into the future of human culture.⁴⁵

Natural History's dichotomous pattern of movement, which shows the progression of natural history from the originary storm to Eve as the first human being at the same time as it also tends toward regression, is connected to the series' use of procedure. First of all, it can be observed that in general, the procedure of frottage follows the schema of progress by developing from tactility into visuality. The first two prints of the series form an antithetical pair (figs. 29, 30). Against three factors that remain constant in both prints (the vertical format, the form of the circle, and the cosmic theme), abrupt changes occur: from darkness to brightness, from the tactile to the optic, from seeing-in to looking back, from the near opacity of the ground to the transparency of the image filled with dazzling light. While in print 1 (fig. 29) the illusion of a storm over the sea only appears gradually against the clearly visible wood grain, in print 2 (fig. 30)



FIGURE 32

Max Ernst, *Stallion and Bride of the Wind* (*L'étalon et la fiancée du vent*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 33), 1925/26. 26 × 42.8 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no 822). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

frottage as a technique of tactile surface manipulation is outshone by the illusion of a heavenly body or cosmic eye. For that matter, Ernst concludes by making the only identifiable texture, a piece of leather, sink below the horizon.

This initial contrast is repeated in the following prints in a mitigated form and is transferred to the natural history as a whole—as the development from ground to figure, from pre-morphic to iconic, from tactile to visual. The last pictures show eye creatures that break the spell of the earth—and thus break free of the frottage ground—and fly away (prints 29–31). That which rises up from the regressive/opaque material is identified in the penultimate picture as the joy of love: the embracing horses (fig. 32) are now only connected by a few threads to the stony ground. Finally, we see Eve, the Only One Left to Us (*Eve le seule qui nous reste*; fig. 33). The romantic trope of the *Rückenfigur* (figure seen from behind) visualizes the inaccessibility of whatever the figure is facing. It brings the viewer into the picture but blocks the viewer from having his or her own original experience. What the viewer gets to see is that which has already been seen.⁴⁶ Eve casts her



FIGURE 33

Max Ernst, *Eve, the Only One Left to Us* (*Éve la seule qui nous reste*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 34), 1925/26. 43.1 × 26.1 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 823). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

gaze upon a future and a landscape known only to her. We can only surmise that there, beyond the picture, the opacity of the material ground is entirely dissolved. The pictorial space is not even cut by a distant horizon line, as is present in many of the frottages. Or more precisely, the horizon line has been transformed into the contour of Eve's body. The Rückenfigur embodies the boundary that cannot be crossed. Beyond this boundary, and thus beyond natural history, are pure transparency and visibility. There, the spell of the stony replacement world is lifted; the fascination of the surrogate and the seeing of resemblances are overcome.

However, the Rückenfigur stands on this side of the boundary. The material/opaque pictorial surface of frottage has been inserted into the picture's motif as the section of wall to the right. Thus, the tension between transparency and opacity, visual iconicity and tactile/material imagination, location beyond and within the stony world of surrogates, is preserved through the final picture. The narrative resolution is the promise of an unrepresentable future; until the narrative's conclusion, the representable natural history is accompanied by a transfixing,

regressive power. The seeing of resemblances always returns to the pre-morphic textures, to the traces of wood, dried paint, patterns, straw, or twine—those elements that remain the same at all stages of the natural history.

One detail illustrates how artfully Ernst fostered, in his ruin writing, the regressive tendency that opposes the development toward ever-greater transparency. In the first print (fig. 29), to the left, from behind the floating picture within a picture, an elongated object protrudes, which can be identified as a comb. Since cubism, the comb has been used as a painter's tool. An instrument for the mechanization of artistic facture, it aids in the avoidance of personal handwriting. In his own paintings from the mid-1920s, Ernst used a comb to carve regular grooves into the oil ground, evoking celestial visions.⁴⁷ In prints 4 and 5 of *Natural History*, he used these paintings as underlays. The imprints of comb traces are transformed into frozen waterfalls and cosmic oscillations. Combing and frottage became surrealist procedures because they are relatively standardized, mechanical activities that produce audacious metaphors (leather nubs and tree bark, grooves and oscillations). In print 1 (fig. 29), the comb, which itself has now been frottaged, is brought into connection with water and waves, two stereotypical metaphors for women's hair. In fact, the same texture underlying the viscous sea appears again in Eve's hair. The comb in the first print is thus retroactively motivated: that which occupies the center of the last image as its main motif—Eve's hair—was already envisioned in the first image in the waves of the sea, which were formed from the same texture.⁴⁸ Granted, this texture does not resemble either waves or hair. Where the metaphor (hair and sea waves) is lacking a common third term (gentle undulations), metonymy (hair and comb) comes to its aid and makes the exhausted figure of speech into an audacious visual figure. The comb in the first picture, which belongs as a tool in the last picture, produces the dissembling resemblance between the sea in the first print and the hair in the last, because and above all in spite of the common texture, which suggests neither hair nor sea.⁴⁹ This is only one example of the numerous metaphoric and metonymic relationships between pictorial motif and frottage underlay that counteract the teleology of *Natural History*—but it is a highly significant example, since it shows how correspondences are made between beginning and end, densest opacity and most ethereal transparency. Whether natural history leads to an inaccessible beyond or endlessly returns to itself again remains undecided.

This undecided movement takes a new turn in a detail, Eve's shadow, which has not been addressed so far. Her shadow's being larger than her head produces the impression that, in some dark way, she is dependent upon the stained section of wall, has emerged from it and is ready at any time to return to its amorphous and inorganic world. But why, exactly, is the shadow larger than her head? Quite likely because it has been projected by a photographer's flash or spotlight. Eve thus not only presents to us a beyond about which we know no more than that we can imagine it as a landscape that has already been seen by Eve; she also presents herself as already seen. Gazing at her, we see a hardened surface illuminated by a flash—but this flash is nothing other than the surrealist gaze. There is a famous formulation in Breton's *Mad Love* (*L'Amour fou*): "It is to the re-creation of this particular state of mind that Surrealism has always aspired, disdaining in the last analysis the prey and the shadow for what is already no longer the shadow and not yet the prey: the shadow and the prey mingled into a unique flash."⁵⁰ This "unique flash," the surrealist gaze, was there. As a mortified figure, Eve is a testament to the past surrealist moment; as a transparent figure, she marks the threshold to that moment's future.⁵¹

AUTOMATIC COMMENTARY

Despite all these artistic devices, the automatic text—and the automatic picture series—cannot automatically be identified as such. The concern over its authenticity can be felt not only in text-immanent and intertextual procedures, but also in the paratextual safeguards that were put in place. For example, in *La Révolution surréaliste*, pieces were published under the rubric "textes surréalistes" (surrealist texts), with the name of the author preceding the text, followed by a colon, as if what followed was the verbatim transcription of a voice. However, the most important testament to a text's automatism comes from the past or, even better, from the future: from the afterlife of previous manifestations of the unconscious, or from their living on in later declarations or narratives, in which the prophetic words of the unconscious return in order to intervene in an event, divulge their real meaning, and give form to the narrated world. For example, toward the end of *The Magnetic Fields*, the ominous syntagm "wood-coal" appears and will pursue Breton eight years later in *Nadja*.⁵²

Surrealist painters use a similar method for the retroactive instigation of the

automatic quality of their works when they respond to an automatic text with images, and their literary friends do likewise when they invent titles for an automatic picture series or write a foreword.⁵³ The titles in *Natural History* may have been devised in collaboration with Paul Éluard,⁵⁴ and the foreword was written by Hans Arp.

Most of the titles in *Natural History* can be interpreted as parapraxes. Instead of “the habits of animals,” as they would normally be described in natural science, we have *The Habits of Leaves* (*les mœurs des feuilles*), and, in fact, the monumental leaf (fig. 34) seems to have a certain bodily torque. *Iceflower Shawl* (*le châle à fleurs givre*;⁵⁵ print 4) combines two syntagms, “flowered shawl” and “ice flowers,” which, through the common appearance of “flower,” seem to interweave of their own accord. *The Start of the Chestnut Tree* (*le start du châtaignier*;⁵⁶ print 14) puts an Anglicism from the mass-cultural language of sports in place of the customary “emergence” or “appearance” from natural science, while a little bit later, the natural science term “origin” is used in association with a technological invention (*The Origin of the Clock* [*l’origine de la pendule*]; print 26). *Solar Currency System* (*le système de monnaie solaire*; print 31) allows economic policy discussions to be glimpsed within astronomic terminology. These lapsus linguae that still allow the correct expression to be guessed are evident in automatic texts on various levels, from individual syntagms all the way to the narrative mode or genre, whose norms and topoi form the background against which the “surrealist texts” are set off as comparatively uncontrolled events of language.

Hans Arp’s foreword to *Natural History* was also published in the same year under the rubric “surrealist texts”⁵⁷ and thus circulated as a document of psychic automatism. In this piece of writing, Arp makes his own division of natural history into the four kingdoms of man-made things, leaves, insects, and crystals. In the first three sections of Arp’s text, man appears as a creature who arranges the universe like a furnished room. The shining sun is replaced by medals of honor; man confuses earthquakes and alarm clocks, hail and showers of candy, and teaches horses to kiss one another like presidents.⁵⁸ This simple list of man’s synthetic substitutes for nature is a variation of an artistic device that also appears prominent in *Natural History* (at least, Arp’s foreword makes it seem prominent): that is, the admixture of natural science with the symbols and products of modern civilization. Of course, this does not make prehistory seem any more familiar; instead, traces of the human take on an alien quality. Titles such as *The Start*

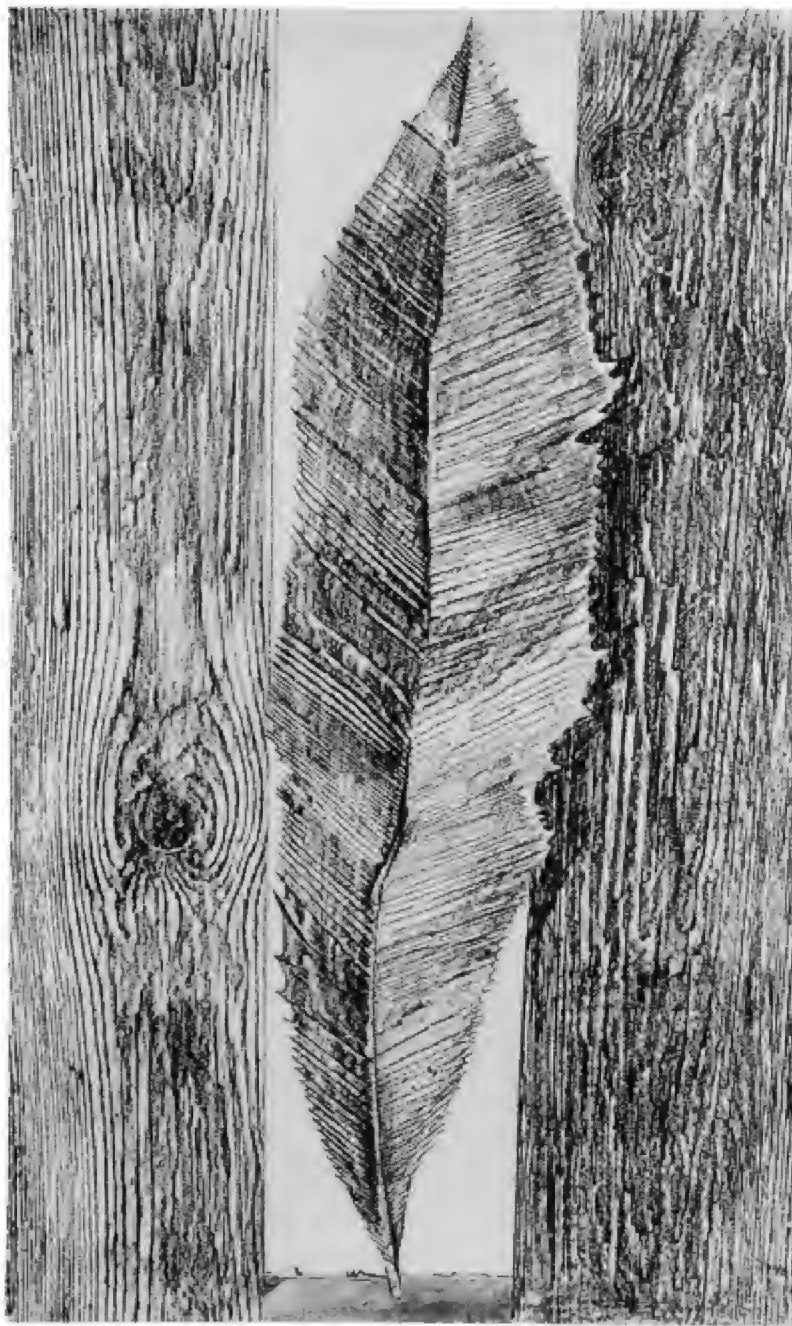


FIGURE 34
Max Ernst, *The Habits of Leaves* (*Les mœurs des feuilles*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 18), 1925/26. 42.7 × 26 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 807). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

of the Chestnut Tree, The Origin of the Clock, and Solar Currency System have already been mentioned; but also in the interplay of image and title, numerous slips occur that cause surrealist prehistory to stumble regularly into the quotidian world of the present. The sun casts glances (A Glance [un coup d'œil]); moons become "little tables" (Little Tables around the Earth [petites tables autour de la terre]); ice becomes a shawl patterned with ice flowers (Iceflower Shawl); scouring rushes assume false positions (False Positions [les fausses positions]), a petrified leaf acts secretively (She Guards Her Secret [elle garde son secret]). In this sense, the foreword can be read as a performative commentary that points out the device of the parapraxis and applies it to Natural History. Arp selects certain titles (or title elements) and motifs, and combines them into new nature/culture montages: for example, from print 13, Scarecrows (les épouvantails) become "scarecrows with volcanoes and geysers in their buttonholes."⁵⁹ In this manner, Arp addresses a total of fifteen frottages and ascribes them to a new kingdom of nature, a *regnum naturae* disfigured by human surrogate creations.

In the next three sections, Arp's discussion of natural kingdoms—the kingdoms of leaves, insects, and crystals—is not a recombination of elements from Natural History, but develops from the interpretive appropriation of these elements, by parodistically arranging the language of typical hermeneutic texts. However, this does not mean that nothing can be learned from his foreword for the close observation of the individual frottages. Arp displays art-critical attention to narrative detail. With a metaphors learned from Lautréamont ("while the ferocious lion scents a succulent pair of newly-weds the lime-tree grows tractably on the boarded plains"), he calls the reader's attention to the uncanny shadow cast from the space in front of print 16 onto the "tractable" lime tree.⁶⁰ Let us consider the following passage more closely:

leaves never grow on trees. like a mountain in a bird's-eye view they have no perspective no soap no hybrid plastron no scotch cheeks no crypt. the spectator always finds himself in a false position before a leaf.⁶¹

The passage begins with a reference to the de-organicizing cut through growth that surrealist prehistory makes ("leaves never grow on trees"), and then in the same sentence calls attention to a specific artistic device. These leaves (figs. 23, 34) (Blätter—the printed sheets and the arboreal leaves depicted in them) have no perspective. It is in fact the case that in the frottages, lines of sight are only

evident in the background and without reference to the main figure, which hovers in stark frontality directly in front of the picture plane. This uncertainty of spatial situation and proportions constantly moves the viewer into “a false position” vis-à-vis the leaf and produces favorable conditions for an imaginative and animating seeing-in, through which the frontal leaf takes on a bodily torque and maybe even a kind of gaze. One notices the shadow that sets off the leaf from the wooden boards and seems to provide it with a three-quarters profile. The “false position” is thus a mobile back-and-forth of seeing, based on whether the texture is being perceived haptically and is being animated, or whether the viewer is attempting to grasp the unstable spatial and size relationships in the picture.

The literary procedure of Arp’s commentary corresponds to the poetics of automatism as it can be deduced from other surrealist texts (more so than from surrealist declarations). Arp gives particular emphasis to the following poetic attributes: evident nonsense with a logical veneer (“with the help of his eleven and a half tails man counts ten and a half objects in the furnished room of the universe”);⁶² obstinacy of the phonetic material (“un mollet de ballet eucharistique”);⁶³ numerous audacious metaphors (the sound of the cuckoo’s jaws is like “a violent fall of hair”);⁶⁴ and an open figurativity that glosses over the difference between metaphoric and literal speech: are mirrored cupboards in fact floating in the sea during the season of the diamond harvest, or does “*armoire à glace*” (mirrored cupboard) stand metaphorically for “*montagne de glace*” (iceberg)?⁶⁵

The automatic character of the text also asserts itself paratextually. The text was first enclosed as the foreword to *Natural History* and published again in the seventh edition of *La Révolution surréaliste*, this second time as a document of surrealist research. The second time it was published, the omission from mention of Max Ernst and the inclusion instead of illustrations by André Masson and Georges Malkine served to underscore the text’s new function as an example of surrealist automatism. But the text can also be read as automatic when enclosed as a foreword in the portfolio of *Natural History*. At least from the perspective of the text, the image sequence offers a narrative normalcy (from originary storm to the appearance of human beings) against which the foreword can profile itself as a comparatively uncontrolled textual event—for example, by beginning with the admixture of nature and man-made objects. On the other hand, Arp’s text does not function as a commentary only—or even primarily—because it draws

attention to particular aspects of the picture series, but instead because it retroactively asserts the series' automatic status. Audacity and richness of tropes, the cancellation of the difference between literal and figurative meaning, numerous parapraxes, and the obstinacy of the visual material are more clearly apparent in *Natural History* after these characteristics have been adopted by and presented in the foreword.

The foreword becomes automatic writing by deforming *Natural History*, and, likewise, *Natural History* gains automatic characteristics from the foreword. For the surrealists, the reciprocal automatization of texts and images was the most important function of reading and viewing. These activities did not aim for understanding. They were the rehearsal of a total communication in which, instead of many individuals talking to one another, a single dark power would talk to and speak for itself. Between images, titles, and foreword, the "communal purpose"⁶⁶ of automatism becomes visible as the creation of an unconscious community whose hermetic statements only become transparent in the future. In the *Manifesto*, Breton invokes the surrealist dialogue as the model of surrealist anti-communication, which promises a future totality of communication. His prerequisite assumption is that deeper understanding is grounded in not understanding. Each conversation partner simply speaks to him- or herself, and occasionally the monologues touch one another coincidentally or through a phonetic echo, and in this one way influence each other in their course. "Words, images are only so many springboards for the mind of the listener."⁶⁷ The monologue of each individual person is the foreshadowing of the one single monologue that the Surrealists seek in the depths of their psyches, in order to launch it forcibly to power. In expectation of its revolution (waiting is the surrealist condition *par excellence*), the group assembles and sets the scene by leading expeditions into the deep time of subjectivity. Ernst's *Natural History* is the field guide that the adventurers have packed in their luggage—and like any good field guide, it is itself an adventure.

SECRETS OF PREHISTORY

Max Ernst's natural history recalls an adventure that itself takes place in the depths of prehistory—an adventure of childhood reading. In order to stage the automatism of his *Natural History* and to authenticate it as an experience of "deep

time,” Ernst refers the series to a pictorial genre originating in his and his friends’ childhood. The subject may recognize his or her own deeper history in natural history, and, conversely, it may be possible to narrate the history of nature as the history of consciousness. However, the surrealists rediscover this originary unity of self and world above all in a location that is multiply determined by culture: in the child’s bedroom of the late nineteenth century.

Geological and paleontological illustrations began to develop their own method in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁸ The most striking moments of their poetics include dramatic leaps in proportion and myopic magnifications of detail, a corresponding interest in texture, the display of the character of the fragment, and the combination of different levels of representation, as when geologic cross-sections or diagrams are inscribed in a naturalistic landscape. The enormous popularity of images from deep time was also bolstered by traditional landscape panoramas, which placed their viewers in the midst of prehistoric flora and fauna. One trendsetter was Franz-Xaver Unger’s book *Die Urwelt in ihren verschiedenen Bildungsperioden* (*The Primordial World in the Different Periods of Its Development*; Vienna, 1850), complete with fourteen “scenic depictions” that ensured the success of the work throughout Europe. The best sellers of the genre soon followed, such as Louis Figuier’s *La Terre avant le déluge* (published in Paris in 1863; English translation, *The World before the Deluge*, published in 1872), Camille Flammarion’s *Le Monde avant la création de l’homme* (*The World before the Creation of Man*; Paris, 1886), and in Germany, Oskar Fraas’s *Vor der Sündfluth!* (*Before the Flood!*; Stuttgart, 1866). All were furnished with depictions of landscape that illustrated the intact ecology of prehistoric epochs (figs. 35, 36). The epistemological status of these reconstructions was precarious. Especially because of their success, they aroused suspicions as to their objectivity. The illustrators had to establish the plausibility of images that reproduce what no human being could have seen.⁶⁹

The pictures of the prehistoric world presented themselves as reference images for a surrealist natural history for two related reasons. For one, the methods of natural history illustration tend toward effects that the surrealists also sought, such as abrupt leaps between near and far, large and small, part and whole, texture and form, and the interweaving of diagram and illusionistic view. For another, the prehistoric picture’s problematic epistemology corresponds to the precarious status of the automatic picture, which also attempts to make visible an inaccessible deep time—not of outer nature, but of inner nature. Ernst,

FIGURE 35
Édouard Riou,
*Condensation
and Rainfall on
the Primitive
Globe*
(*Condensation
et chute
des eaux
sur le globe
primitif*).
From Louis
Figuier, *La
Terre avant le
déluge* (Paris,
1863).

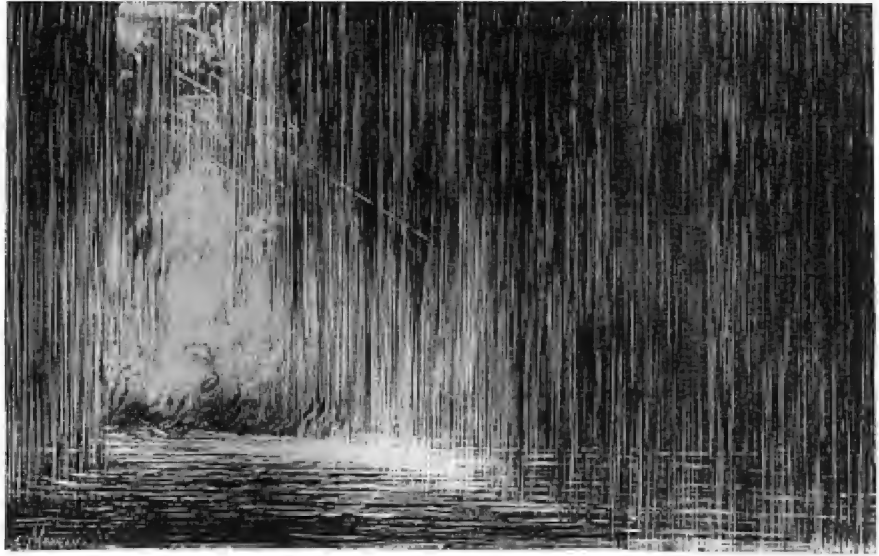


FIGURE 36
Édouard
Riou, *Artist's
Depiction
of the Earth
during the
Silurian
Period* (*Vue
idéale de la
terre pendant
la période
silurienne*).
From Louis
Figuier, *La
Terre avant le
déluge* (Paris,
1863).



who strove to follow the program of automatism to the same degree as he understood the need to stage its aporias, found in the geological illustrations of the nineteenth century a dramaturgical source in which he was able to see the poetics of his own art being modeled.

The geological illustrators developed an implicit form of visual argumentation in order to make their pictures seem less dubious. The sublimely uninhabited prehistoric views are legitimated by directly inserting, or else appending, images of the natural documents that allow such reconstructions to be made. If the shells of dead trilobites have washed ashore and lie awaiting petrification, then the panorama of the prehistoric sea already contains, in plain view, the fossil findings that will be available to modern research. Alternatively, these references to scientific bases can also be placed in their own illustrations, where they can be presented more explicitly as independent evidence. Hence, smaller illustrations accompany the panoramas and separately array the complete chain of fossil specimens that underlie the reconstruction of a particular plant or animal. They depict the extinct species as it can be found—or, more accurately, as it is presented—in a museum of natural history: as petrified and fragmented fossils. The view into prehistory is substantiated with these two artistic devices, the staging and appending of geologic documents. First, it is shown how, even on the shore of the primordial sea, nature is mindful of future research. And second, natural images that have been preserved in fragments through fossilization are depicted in their fragmented state, so that the move to the artistic illustration of the original unity of nature can be given an established starting point.

This manner of viewing prehistory also applies for the “inadmissible flora and fauna” (André Breton) of automatism. While recounting prehistory, *Natural History* also tells the story of its fragmentary and mortifying documentation. Ernst’s natural history likewise consists of views of a prehistoric world (prints 1, 2, 3, and others) as well as images that document the remains of this time before time (prints 4, 11, 15, and others). These two types of image constantly merge into one another, since the documentary specimens are situated in deserted prehistoric landscapes and, in general, the reconstruction views have the appearance of fossilized images. The effect and its authentication can no longer be differentiated. This situation is seen again in the use of scientific illustrations. The quality of pastness and the problematic representability of automatic images are emphasized using strategies of popular science illustration, in order to achieve a sur-

realist penetration of the image by the conditions of its visibility. As an example, one might consider the third print (fig. 37) of *Natural History*. The impossible view it documents is that of the earth as seen from outer space. The impossibility of this view is expressed in the doubling of the earth, which appears once as a planet circled by three moons, and again as the ground of the landscape. *The Earth Views the Earth* (*Terre vue de la Terre*) is the title of a similar frottage not included in *Natural History*.⁷⁰ An eye that floats somewhere in the cosmos in order to observe the prehistoric metamorphoses of our planet will always be positioned on the earth. The penetration of representation by its conditions results in an imaginary situation: one is both part of the fantasy and its author, both projected into the imagined scene as well as comprising the impossible condition of its reality. From this phantasmal position, it is only consistent that the viewer perceives additional never-before-seen phenomena that likewise all prove that the viewer's imagination has always already been present in the place where he or she is about to look. In print 3 (fig. 37), the earth and its moons form a figure that takes on human features in the full, feminine mouth of the uppermost moon. Only visible in the original, a black aura surrounds all four heavenly bodies and sets them off from the slightly brighter sky. In the zone of the ground and in the central planet—the two manifestations of the earth—the stony crust is splitting open, in its ruins allowing a glimpse of the possibility of future figures. In the moon to the lower left, the craters produce a star pattern, and in the moon to the lower right, there appears a linear diagram, which calls attention to the possibility of thinking of the ensemble of four heavenly bodies as a constellation. In fact, to the left of the central planet, one can make out a constellation drawn into the dark night sky. What appears as a constellation from far away appears as a figure from up close.

Ernst's *Natural History* restages the epistemological problems of images of deep time. It is of no little importance for the social function of the picture series that a concrete reference text is indicated: Louis Figuier's *The World before the Deluge*. This book, circulated in many editions and predominantly directed at young people, was the most successful synthesis of the traditions of illustration that are typical for the natural histories of the nineteenth century.⁷¹ Figuier, too, includes two different types of images—objective illustrations of fossil specimens, geological sections, and other scientific documents or diagrams, as well as engravings of landscapes by Édouard Riou, who would go on to become famous

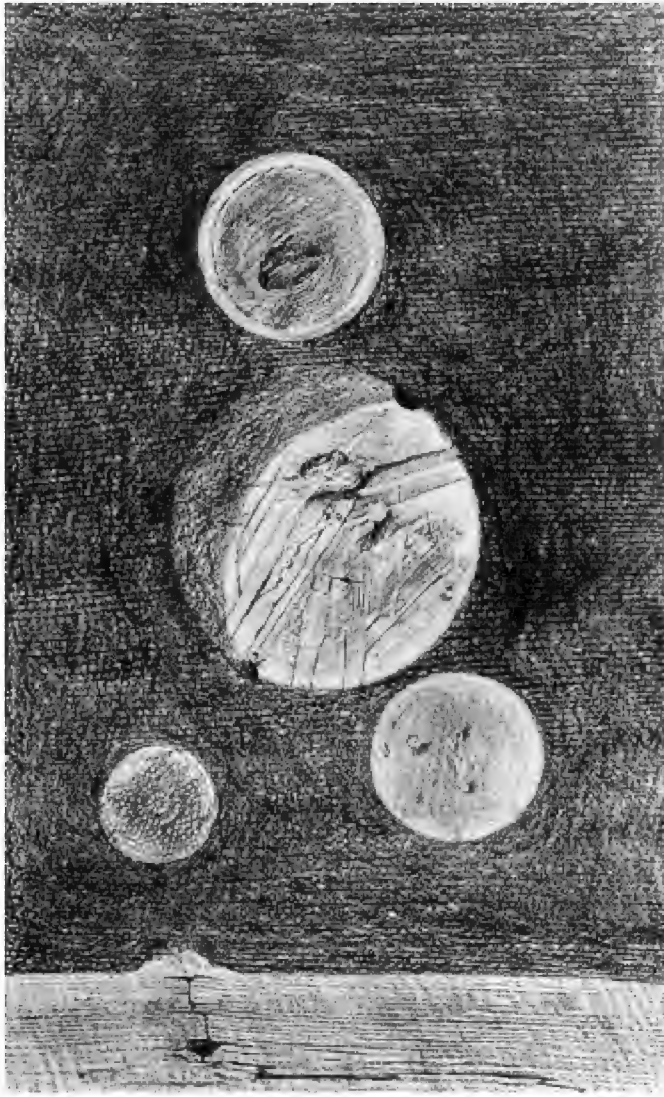


FIGURE 37

Max Ernst, *Little Tables around the Earth* (*Petites tables autour de la terre*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 3), 1925/26. 44.5 × 27.5 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 792). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

above all as the illustrator of Jules Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages* (*Voyages extraordinaires*). In a sublime style learned from John Martin, these panoramas provide a view of the earth's prehuman epochs, from its beginnings in an originary storm, through the Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, Permian, Triassic, and Cretaceous periods, to the advent of human beings.

The first two full-page panoramas by Riou show significant similarities to the first two frottages of *Natural History: Condensation et chute des eaux sur le globe primitif* (*Condensation and Rainfall on the Primitive Globe*; fig. 35) illustrates what at the time was the cutting-edge theory of the original state of the earth as an incandescent ball in outer space, whose primordial sea was formed when gradual cooling caused steam to condense in its atmosphere. In Riou's second panorama, *Vue idéale de la Terre pendant la période silurienne* (*Artist's Depiction of the Earth during the Silurian Period*) (fig. 36), the sun appears over this sea for the first time. When *The World before the Deluge* is placed side by side with *Natural History* (figs. 29, 30), the similarity is evident in the central motifs of storm and sun, as well as in details such as, in Riou's first panorama, the atmospheric light phenomena, which return in the effects of the wood grain as well as the illumination of the center of Ernst's first print, and the sunbeams, which are materialized in a similar fashion by both Riou and Ernst.

By making these images the backdrop for his own natural history, Ernst also adopts the teleological narrative template, from original chaos to the advent of human beings. Figuiet thought of his book, and especially the accompanying illustrations, as the elucidation of a natural history that culminated in the appearance of human beings. At the time Figuiet's book was published, Darwin's theory of natural selection was eliciting controversial discussions but was still being met widely with rejection. Not until the sixth edition did Figuiet feel the need to respond to the pressure of new intellectual trends by replacing his illustration of the first humans, a nuclear family in a paradisaical natural state, with a new picture of the primal horde on the hunt.⁷² As a whole, Figuiet's book is a vivid example of how, in the popular science and pedagogy of the nineteenth century, faith in science and hope for progress could be instrumentalized in the education of good citizens and God-fearing people. In a text from 1923 dedicated to Ernst, the surrealists' accusation that natural history was a modern catechism might have been applied directly to Figuiet.⁷³ Also, *Natural History's* parodic play on the biblical Genesis, in its movement from the first appearance of light to

Eve,⁷⁴ may have laid the groundwork for the surrealist anti-clericalism that was directed at church functionaries as well as the apparatus of scientific piety. René Crevel, who wrote one of the first reviews of *Natural History* in 1927, presented the series to readers of the *Nouvelle revue française* as a surrealist primer:

What we so proudly call “our education” has to be remade from the ground up. Max Ernst is right when, under the simple title *Natural History*, he brings together in thirty-four prints the awesome wonders of a universe whose little secrets we will never trample on again—little secrets that one day will be greater than we are.⁷⁵

Crevel’s phrase “little secrets that one day will be greater than we are” leads one to wonder about the possible function of such veiled reproofs. More generally, it raises the question, how do “little secrets” come to be “greater than we are”? From a poetological perspective, there is another, related question. Namely, at the beginning of an automatic picture series that asserts its spontaneous originality in the motif of rain, what explains the appearance of a pedagogical best seller from the previous century and (at least superficially) the adoption of its developmental model from original chaos to human beings? Here, an observation from literary studies comes to our aid. Automatic texts often make use of narrative stereotypes and assert their automatic character in the reworking and decomposition of them. The clichéd narrative form that glimmers through an automatic text serves to constitute the text as an uncontrolled event. In our discussion, it is of particular importance that the subtext against which the automatic text is set off is itself transformed into a fragment, which is retrieved from the depths of the unconscious and inserted into the automatic text. It is no accident that these subtexts most often represent genres such as the fable or the adventure story, which refer to the reading experiences of childhood and adolescence.⁷⁶ Breton used fixed stereotypes as foils for his own spontaneity, and at the same time received them as bottled messages from the time of his childhood. Their authenticity was all the more unimpeachable since Breton wrote his texts in school notebooks with covers depicting scenes of knights in armor and other adventures.⁷⁷

The genre of natural history as represented by Figuier’s book was also predominantly directed at young people, in explicit competition with traditional educational literature. In the place of fantasy, with its products such as fairy tales

and fables that lead impressionable young minds permanently astray, Figuier wanted to install science as the teacher.⁷⁸ The expulsion of fables from pedagogy aims to complete a process in intellectual history that Wolf Lepenies describes as having already taken its decisive turn in the eighteenth century, with the expulsion of fables from scientific natural history.⁷⁹ Now fables would no longer wreak their havoc in the one place where they had been permitted to survive—in schoolbooks. If his advice were to go unheeded, Figuier predicted the burgeoning of such grave threats to the French nation as lies, mysticism, spiritualism, socialism, and madness. From a surrealist point of view, there was no question about it: the ones who were educated by Figuier and his ilk had to have their education “remade,” as Crevel states in his review. In an announcement he designed for the series, Paul Éluard also emphasized that Ernst’s *Natural History* tells fables again. As a promotional commentary, he selected a passage from Condorcet’s “Eulogy of M. De Buffon,” which characterizes the natural scientist as a maker of fables that testify to a powerful and independent imagination.⁸⁰ Éluard may have chosen this quotation not in order to draw parallels between Buffon’s and Ernst’s natural histories,⁸¹ but—more appropriately for an advertisement—in the spirit of provocation. Eyebrows were surely raised at the notion of the legacy of France’s great natural scientist and stylist falling to a German painter and collagist.

However, fables and narratives do not return in surrealist natural history, since they never actually vanished from popular science teaching. As a pedagogue and best-selling author, Figuier was clever enough to adorn the narrative of the world in its becoming with entertaining digressions for his young readership. He recounts how dinosaurs were imagined as dragons in legend and literature. But his most important device consists in repeatedly evoking the amazing and sublime alienness of prehistory. Just as the illustrations alternate between documentary fossil specimens and fantastic panoramas, throughout his scientific prose, Figuier liberally scatters evocative descriptions of the prehistoric world.

The alien silence of this world⁸² was also striking to the first modern artist to bring Figuier’s book, and especially Riou’s illustrations, into the consciousness of the avant-garde. In his most well-known declaration, “On Metaphysical Art,” Giorgio de Chirico wrote that he first encountered the “solitude of signs” and the “absence of human beings”—which he later would find in Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Böcklin—when he was a child, in Riou’s prehuman landscapes.⁸³

This “solitude of signs,” as de Chirico explains in the previous section, “Madness and Art,” is preceded by the obliteration of memory, since it is memory that produces the cohesion of the world. Without memory, there would be no connection between objects; they would break apart into disparate elements, as evinced in de Chirico’s paintings. Thus, de Chirico first trained his gaze by looking at the uninhabited expanses of prehistory, because this time before any possible conscious memory prefigures the loss of memory that, according to him, forms the basis of the new painting.

Surrealist automatism can be described as the radicalization of this annihilation of conscious memory by tunneling into psychic deep time. Among the “secrets of the magical Surrealist art” that Breton touts in the *Manifesto*, he ultimately lists the cancellation of death:

Surrealism will usher you into death, which is a secret society. It will glove your hand, burying therein the profound M with which the word Memory begins.⁸⁴

For surrealism, a group with certain features of a secret society, death can also be considered an association that conceals itself from, and thus undermines, conventional reality. Its initiation symbol, the glove, metaphorically represents memory’s burial shroud. Drawing upon the significance of the hand in surrealist poetics (as the contemptible “main à plume,” which stands for poetry as a profession, and as the greatly desired open palm, which passively receives the automatic rain),⁸⁵ the following interpretation of Breton’s allegory can be offered: The glove that conceals the “main à plume” is automatism’s magic instrument, burying the memory of conventions and, with them, an individual’s own abilities. In this way, the doors are opened to the secret chambers of reality. In 1924, the year in which the *Manifesto* was published, Ernst devoted a painting to this allegory.⁸⁶ Later Breton would reformulate his poetics of deep memory using Freudian terms. In this reconception, the surrealists’ wealth consists of acoustic and optical traces of memory, deposited in the unconscious, which only automatism is capable of refining into texts and images.⁸⁷

In his *Natural History*, Ernst’s play on Riou’s illustrations—his use of them as a narrative model against which the automatic natural history is set off and that the automatic natural history retrieves from out of the prehistory of childhood—could only have been understood in the circle of his surrealist friends. It is all the more probable that they did understand the allusion since de Chirico had already



FIGURE 38

Max Ernst, *Two Young Girls Riding across the Sky* (*Deux jeunes filles se promènent à travers le ciel*), 1929. 10 × 16 cm, collage on paper. Private collection (S/M no. 1404). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

called attention to Riou. When, around 1930, Ernst began to reveal the source material of his earlier work,⁸⁸ he modified one of Riou's panoramas in the collage *Two Young Girls Riding across the Sky* (*Deux jeunes filles se promènent à travers le ciel*; fig. 38).⁸⁹ His surrealist friends, to whom Riou was well known as an illustrator (especially of Jules Verne's books), may have been able to identify the source exactly. If not, then they could have ascribed it to their own childhood reading material. And perhaps they received Ernst's collage as a retroactive indicator of the genre underlying *Natural History*: this is one of Crevel's "little secrets that one day will be greater than we are." At this point, these secrets still only serve to constitute a group and to deliver its bottled messages from the depths of time and the unconscious. But the "communal purpose"⁹⁰ of automatism aims toward a revolutionary future that will command the entire social reality. This reality is prefigured by the avant-garde group that gives itself over to the communication conditions of the unconscious. The unconscious's signs stem from the childhood of the future surrealists, who, on both sides of the Rhine, had immersed themselves in Riou's landscape panoramas and learned how to daydream. Thus,

the surrealists' unconscious is the source of their future communication and society inasmuch as this unconscious consists of out-of-date best sellers and well-worn illustrations. Only that which has at one time occupied the imagination so consumingly—as only surrogates have the power to do—can become an origin.

Another of the “little secrets that one day will be greater than we are” should be presented briefly, in order to demonstrate how, in automatism, original and prefabricated images condition one another. Between *The Vaccinated Bread* (*Pain vacciné*; print 23) and the first birds (prints 25ff.), a dragonfly nosedives over the primordial sea (fig. 39). As the first print that unequivocally represents an animal, it nevertheless remains allied with the plant kingdom. Leaves serve as wings, and a ball resembling a chestnut serves as a head. The same template that has produced the diamond-patterned bark of prehistoric plants here forms the surging sea over which the dragonfly is flying. In the constellation that appears in the firmament, Ernst repeats a device that by now has become familiar: the similarity between constellation and figure gives rise to the conjecture that constellation and dragonfly are really one and the same being, seen from up close and far away. Hence, the dragonfly repeats the leaps back and forth between the kingdoms of plants, birds, and cosmic beings. These latter will follow two stages later in the natural history [prints 29ff.]).

Searching for another motivation for the appearance of the dragonfly requires setting aside the aspects of manifest devices and thematic associations, and risking a look into the semi-darkness of iconographic connotations, which the surrealists considered a medium of unconscious communication. The dragonfly appears in *Figuier*, too, as the most important fossil document of prehistoric insect life. In a hunting scene, Riou chooses the delicate creature as the tragic heroine who falls victim to a winged dinosaur (figs. 40, 41). The central beam of light, casting the dinosaur's teeth and its prey into melodramatic silhouette, cuts through the semi-darkness of the prehistoric landscape, in which the outlines of an indeterminate number of additional reptiles can be either made out or imagined. No palm tree is empty of a dangerous winged creature; no scouring rush cannot be read as a phallic symbol. Of course, it is Ernst's dragonfly that inspires interpreting the prehistoric hunt as the primal scene of a paleo-analytic seduction theory: the print is titled *Lightning Bolts under Fourteen Years* (*Les éclairs au-dessous de quatorze ans*). In French, dragonflies, known as “demoiselles,” are underage girls.⁹¹

FIGURE 39

Max Ernst, *Lightning Bolts under Fourteen Years* (*Les éclairs au-dessous de quatorze ans*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 24), 1925/26. 42 × 26 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 813). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



As a book for young people in the hands of the surrealists, *The World before the Deluge* becomes a fossil of pedagogically ambitious natural history and migrates from childhood in the late nineteenth century to just below the surface of the frottaged natural history. Among hundreds of illustrations, the image of the dragonfly remains accidentally lodged in memory—as a contingent fragment that connects the surrealist picture series with a submerged past. The way in which this fragment encompasses the shared past of poets and artists who, as



FIGURE 40
Édouard
Riou, *Artist's
Depiction
of the Earth
during the
Liassic Period
(Vue idéale
de la terre
pendant la
période du
Lias)*. From
Louis Figuier,
*La Terre avant
le déluge*
(Paris, 1863).

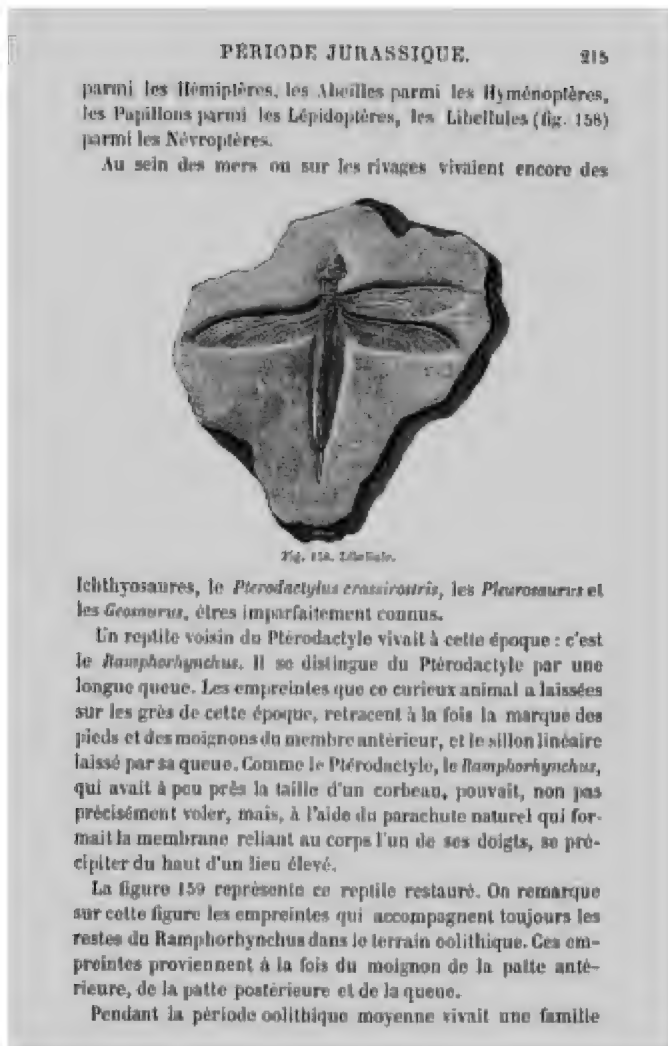
children, trained their imaginations by looking at Riou's landscapes clarifies the function of *Natural History* within the surrealist group. Ernst used frottage as a technique of the secret, for the suggestion of hidden pictures, and consequently his natural history is filled with "little secrets." Moreover, Ernst conceived of frottage as a technique of non-simultaneous images that document the past by giving it a ghostly afterlife, and thus the little secrets of childhood become omens of the present and future. From the perspective of revolutionaries who want to start "our education" over again, these images contain no lesser promise than to return to the deep time of childhood in order to create a new unconscious. Before I turn to this central fantasy of surrealism, which also characterizes Ernst's use of Freud's writings, it is necessary to examine the threshold of this new unconscious. Standing on the threshold is Gala Éluard.

GALA

In 1921 Gala and Paul Éluard visited Cologne, and in 1922 Ernst traveled with Paul's passport to Paris, where he lived with Paul and Gala in the suburb of Eaubonne until 1924. After Paul's mysterious escape to the Far East, which ended

FIGURE 41

From Louis Figuier, *The World before the Deluge* (*La Terre avant le déluge*) (Paris, 1863).



when Max and Gala came to get him, Gala separated from Max and returned to her husband for the space of one year.⁹² In the 1950s, Ernst wrote that he had dedicated his *Natural History* to Paul Éluard, and that Paul in turn had made a gift of it to Gala.⁹³

Ernst may have made the selection of frottages for *Natural History* together with Paul Éluard.⁹⁴ Several prints contain clear allusions to Éluard's lyric works.



PLATE 1

Max Ernst, *Frozen Landscapes, Icicles and Mineral Types of the Female Body* (eislandschaften, eiszapfen und gesteinsarten des weiblichen körpers), 1920. 25.3 × 24.4 cm, gouache and pencil (overpainting on a print), Stockholm, Moderna Museet (Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 352 [hereafter "S/M"]). Photo: Moderna Museet / Stockholm. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

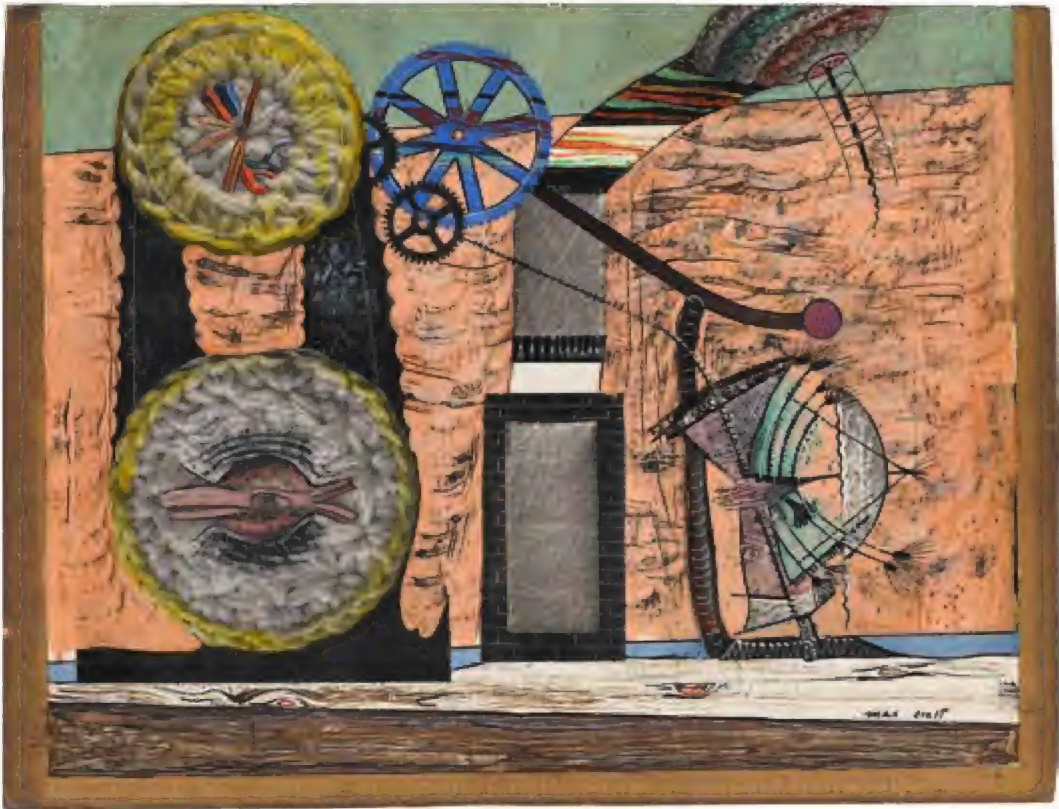


PLATE 2

Max Ernst, *Madam Hostess on the Lahn, guardian angel of the Germans, thine is the industry anatomy paleontology grant us thy jubilation* (*frau wirtin an der lahn, schutzengelin der deutschen, dein ist die industrie anatomie paläontologie schenk uns deine frohlocken*), 1920. 25 × 31.5 cm, collage, gouache, ink on paper, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung. Photo: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (S/M no. 405). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



PLATE 3

Max Ernst, *Woman, Old Man, and Flower (weib, greis u. blume)*, 1924. 97 × 130 cm, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York (S/M no. 660). © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



PLATE 4

Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain (l'Europe après la pluie)*, 1933. 101 × 149 cm, oil and plaster on plywood (S/M no. 1881). Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

The title of the third print, *Little Tables around the Earth* (*petites tables autour de la terre*), refers to his poem “Dancing” (“*Dans la danse*”), which evokes the fairy-tale table that covers itself on command⁹⁵ and transforms it into an erotic wish machine.⁹⁶ The lines “there are women of wood dark and green” may have led readers interested in psychoanalysis—among whom Ernst was one—to a passage in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* where Freud describes the table and wood as “puzzling, but certainly female symbols.”⁹⁷ For a surrealist, less interested in what is stable and evident than in fluctuating and enigmatic symbolism, this statement may have been particularly attractive. The “puzzling” femininity of table and of wood, which Éluard had already treated in his interpretation of the fairy-tale command “table, be covered,” may also have preoccupied his friend, who made rubbings of many wooden surfaces. Frottage as a technique that makes wish images grow out of boards is the technique of “table, be covered.” The tables dancing around the earth are the tables of desire.

Éluard’s poem concludes with the admission that he doesn’t like the tables he is dancing on.⁹⁸ The readily available, variable gifts of the libidinous “table, be covered” lead to surfeit. His poetry only grants endless allure to one single, very slender, obscurely phallic woman. She begins to haunt Ernst’s art shortly after their first meeting, in the famous overpainting *Approaching Puberty . . . The Pleiades* (*Les Pléiades*).⁹⁹ In 1923 Ernst painted murals for the shared house in Eaubonne.¹⁰⁰ In one picture, Gala, a transparent apparition, presents the interior of her body; in another, two intersecting female figures metamorphose, first into an abdomen and then (as its shadow) into a phallus. In *Eve, the Only One Left to Us* (*Ève, la seule qui nous reste*; fig. 33), the elongation of the neck and the transparency of the body are sufficient to recall the Gala myth. In addition, one detail plays on Gala’s self-presentation: the hairs on Eve’s neck. Gala’s disinclination to use a razor or tweezers was part of the representation of herself as a passionate Russian woman. In Man Ray’s famous photograph of her eyes, which was retouched by Ernst, her eyebrows almost grow together (fig. 42).

Thus we have arrived at the two dark caverns that were the prime objects of the courtly love and fetishization of her husband as well as her lover.¹⁰¹ *Natural History*, which tells the story of a fantasizing and seeing nature, brings eyes from the depths of the earth into the light, subjects them to monstrous metamorphoses, and removes them to the sky as cosmic manifestations. Like the smile of his phallic mother, which Leonardo da Vinci shifts from one painting to another—

FIGURE 42
Max Ernst,
*The Visible
Woman*
(*la femme
visible*), 1925.
39 × 55 cm,
photographic
enlargement
and pencil.
Private
collection
(S/M no.
787). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.



from the Virgin Mary, to Saint Anne, to John the Baptist¹⁰²—the eye motif migrates through Ernst's frottages. But how might Ernst and Éluard have recognized Gala's eyes in them, specifically? In the enormous fossil eye titled *The Wheel of Light* (*La roue de la lumière*), there are some of the most important topoi that Paul Éluard employed in his poems about Gala (fig. 43). But first of all, the stony eye refers back to Gala's self-presentation (fig. 42). In contrast to her uncombed hair and ungroomed eyebrows, her eyelashes are carefully formed into bristling spikes, which crown each eye with a dangerous wreath. Ernst traced this wreath and used retouching to extend and hone each spike of a lash. In her portrait, through her lashes Gala's gaze takes on an impenetrability that is only enhanced by the glints of light positioned in each eye. The hardness of this gaze is virtually material, which explains the two dark shadows it casts over the landscape.

In *The Wheel of Light*, Ernst repeats the armoring of the gaze with a spiked wreath and heightens its aggressiveness through a device of frottage. The leather used as an underlay transfers its animality to the stone fragment in which the eye is encased. Moreover, this snake-like quality is also semantically associated with metaphors of petrification through the Medusa myth. In his retouching of

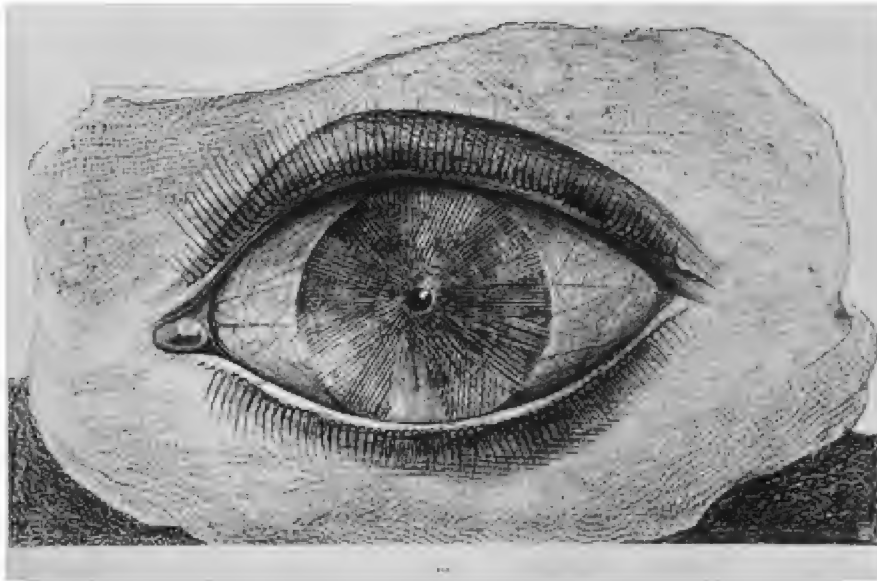


FIGURE 43
Max Ernst,
*The Wheel of
Light* (*La roue
de la lumière*)
(*Histoire
naturelle*, print
29), 1925/26.
25 × 42 cm
(measure-
ment of
image), photo-
engraving
from frottage
(S/M no.
818). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

Man Ray's portrait of Gala's eyes (fig. 42), Ernst already associates the threat of the gaze that casts dark shadows over the sea with a rocky mountain landscape.

Many variations on the motif of the stony and petrifying gaze can be found in Paul Éluard's *Capital of Pain* (*Capitale de la douleur*; 1926). Petrification can become dazzlement, the stony eye a gleaming sun; just as in *Natural History*, the fossil eye bears the title *The Wheel of Light*. This title refers back to print 2, in which, conversely, the appearance of the sun is given the title *A Glance*. Just as, at the end of the natural history, the stony eye is designated a heavenly body, so, at the beginning, the sun is designated an eye—what's more, this sun's surface resembles the stony waste of the moon. In contrast to this repeated castration symbolism, the eye in print 29 (fig. 43) is formed out of leaves. In "Absences II," Paul Éluard uses the "window of foliage" to present the same motif of hope that the rigid and paralyzing effect of the inaccessible gaze will yield again in fructifying love. The eye opens in a nature without bounds: "Une fenêtre de feuillage / S'ouvre soudain dans son visage. / Où poserai-je mes lèvres, nature sans rivage?"¹⁰³ From the metamorphosis of the woman of stone into the microcosm of a brimming nature that welcomes the poet instead of refusing him with mineral hardness, there follows the cosmic omnipresence of her eyes in water and light. The title *Wheel*

of Light, by repealing the material heaviness of the petrification motif and suspending it in light, suggestively anticipates what is fulfilled two prints later. *Solar Currency System* releases the eye from the stony spell and makes an entire flock of eyes hover in space as celestial apparitions in which images of new microcosms emerge. Instead of emitting the Medusa glare, Gala's eyes become birthplaces of new worlds, which, as in Éluard's "Absences II," arise from a morphology of the round.¹⁰⁴

This brief iconographic examination, pursuing references to Gala's self-presentation and Paul's poetry, raises the question of whether Ernst may have seen these allusions to the *ménage à trois* as more than simply the memories of an affair that was "ancient history." As we have seen, the surrealists only ascribed value to memory if it tunnels into the deep time of childhood in order to penetrate to the origin of automatism, whose power lies in its involvement with surrogates. In order to count as surrealist events, recent events like the three years together in the suburbs of Paris would have to reach back into prehistory. Ernst discovered that the modern route into prehistory had been recorded in the writings of Freud. The next chapter will pose the question of what it means to be a psychoanalytic painter—and at that, the first. The objective will be to show how, in Ernst's hands, psychoanalysis becomes a tool, not only for accessing the prehistory of childhood, but also for describing how the surrealist can remake his unconscious.

SURREALIST COMMUNICATION

Frottage conceals objects so that resemblances become visible in their traces. In doing so, as was discussed in the previous chapter, it also generates a densely allusive and hermetic iconography. The secrets of this iconography refer to constellations within the surrealist group, and for their own part they set in motion a socializing effect. Thus, it would not be correct to describe *Natural History* as a coded communication between initiates. Neither Édouard Riou's woodcuts nor Paul Éluard's poems contain a key to Max Ernst's pictures; nor, for that matter, does Hans Arp's foreword. A surrealist communication between images and texts is not brought about by secret knowledge, but by not knowing and by mutual misunderstandings. In the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, with his monologic dialogue, Breton provided a model for this uncomprehending, blind, and thus automatic communication, which allows a post-revolutionary totality of unconscious communication to be glimpsed. If, in this blindness and incomprehension, secret meanings or even commentary nevertheless emerge (such as Arp's art-critical observations or Ernst's adaptation of Éluard's "table, be covered" motif), these only attest to the fact that unconscious communication is already functioning within the surrealist group, in anticipation of the perfect transparency of the future.¹

This condition—that every assumption of interpretative distance collapses again into the succession of parapraxes, dreams, and automatism—allows Ernst's much-discussed interest in psychoanalysis to be brought into a new light. From a historical standpoint, the question of whether the artist's surrealist pictures require a psychoanalytically informed iconographic decryption² or whether, as Ernst proclaimed in later years, they are banned from interpretation simply has no bearing.³ These alternatives were imposed after the disintegration of the

surrealist group, when the artist's work became the object of art-historical research. Exponents of postwar surrealism—and after them, art historians trained in iconography—went in search of the psychoanalytically legible, while Werner Spies, in close contact with Ernst and under the sway of current artistic positions such as Oulipo and the *nouveau roman* (new novel), analyzed materials and methods. But in the first years of surrealism, these alternatives had not yet been posed, since hidden meaning and iconographic innuendo had less value as knowledge (either of an esoteric or canonical nature) than as unconscious communication within the surrealist group.

Yet another, simpler problem has until now hampered the understanding of Ernst's interest in psychoanalysis: the rather careless use of his writing, which has predominantly been treated as a collection of supporting materials for interpretations of content or poetological commentary.⁴ It has escaped observation that in the course of decades, in accordance with changes in surrealist objectives, the artist's texts were repeatedly rewritten, printed in different types of publications, and considered as having different functions. In what follows, using the example of his first psychoanalytically inflected text, it will be demonstrated that Ernst's writings speak more powerfully when we read them in their historical context—and that means above all in their material context.

A HALLUCINATION IN PRINT

On October 1, 1927, *La Révolution surréaliste* printed Max Ernst's "Visions of Half-Sleep" ("Visions de demi-sommeil"). The title recalls the function of hypnagogic images in automatic writing as André Breton defined them in the *Manifesto of Surrealism*: they are messages from the unconscious (like the phrase "there is a man cut in two by the window"), which the poet can register while barely awake, before they release a stream of automatic images. "Visions of Half-Sleep," however, was not identified as a declaration. The presentation (a colon after the name "Max Ernst") identifies the text as a document of surrealist research, like a dream transcript or automatic text, or like the "Journal of an Apparition" ("Journal d'une apparition") by Robert Desnos, published in the same edition. The separation of the text into three parts shows that the half-asleep hallucinations have already been psychoanalytically processed. The first section is "From 5 to 7 Years," the second, "At the Age of Puberty," and the third, "January 1926."

These are the three points in time that Freud presents as critical in the etiology of a neurosis: early childhood, reawakening sexuality, and the recent occasion. Turning over a few more pages, the reader of *La Révolution surréaliste* comes upon an excerpt of the first French translation of *The Question of Lay Analysis*, and thus receives a brief introduction into the (pre)history of the psyche and its constitutive catastrophe, the early childhood trauma. The impulse behind Freud's text, his affirmative answer to the question of whether psychoanalysis can also be practiced without medical training, strengthened the surrealists' resolve to lay the groundwork for the new science and at the same time to compete with it.⁵

As a document of surrealist research, "Visions of Half-Sleep" differs in its ambitions and function from Ernst's later texts. For example, "How to Force Inspiration" ("Comment on force l'inspiration"), published in 1933 in *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, devotes itself explicitly to the procedures of collage, frottage, and grattage in order to clarify their position within surrealist poetics. Thus, it is not a document of surrealist research but a statement of its mission.⁶ In "Visions of Half-Sleep," however, there are no guidelines for or commentary on this mission. No explicit mention is made of any of Ernst's pictures. For an illustration, there is a relief by Hans Arp, author of the foreword to *Natural History*, which was printed in a preceding issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* as an automatic text, though without reference to Ernst's prints—Arp's text was instead illustrated with pictures by André Masson and Georges Malkine. No text addresses an image; no image illustrates a text. The surrealist publication policy pursues the objective of presenting images and texts as the consequence of automatic expressions, between which there is no discursive distance that would allow for the establishment of a stable meta-level.

While the layout of "Visions of Half-Sleep" purposely distracts from the possibility of reading it as a text about Ernst's pictures, its larger presentation context leads right back to this possibility. The same issue to publish Ernst's first psychoanalytically inflected text as a surrealist document also contains two paratextual indicators that suggest a mission statement can also be gleaned from the document. First, there is the advance publication of *The Question of Lay Analysis*, in which the psychoanalytic developmental model that underlies Ernst's hallucinations is briefly outlined; then, on the very first page, there is a reproduction of Ernst's grattage *Paradise*—one of the pictures whose origin is staged in the text "Visions of Half-Sleep."

Why go to such circuitous lengths to present “Visions of Half-Sleep” as a document and, inasmuch as it is a document, also as a declaration? The reader is led to receive the text in the context of the magazine, and in this way to acknowledge the authority of the avant-garde group as a whole. The danger that surrealist painters would be isolated and would attain success—not least commercial—on the basis of formal criteria worried Breton and shook his faith in the revolutionary reliability of his painter friends (see chapter 2). With his frottages and grattages, Ernst had for the first time achieved praise from the formalistically oriented art magazine *Cahiers d'Art*.⁷ Thus, he may have also authored his text as proof that he was committed less to art *per se* than to surrealist research.

THE PRIMAL SCENE AND THE DEFERRED ACTION OF THE IMAGE

The first part of “Visions of Half-Sleep” describes a hallucination that Max Ernst had between the ages of five and seven. It closely corresponds to the concept of the primal scene as outlined by Freud in his study on the “Wolf Man,” which was also iconographically influential for Ernst. But the poetological function of the primal scene only becomes clear from a second, even more famous case study, Freud’s *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*.⁸ In order to understand how “Visions of Half-Sleep” presents a surrealist socialization fantasy, it is not sufficient to consider the first of the three hallucinations separately, as has been a common practice of scholarly research. In accordance with the underlying psychoanalytic schema, the first vision must be interpreted in view of the second and third.

In a panel of crudely painted imitation mahogany, organic forms appear: a menacing eye, a long nose, a bird’s head with thick black hair. In front of the panel, a bogeyman with Ernst’s father’s mustache makes slow, comical movements and leaps around with spread legs. Then, with a fat, soft crayon, he draws quickly on the false mahogany, forming repulsive creatures that come to life. He gathers the creatures into a vase, and his crayon turns into a whip, which the little man, who by now is clearly Ernst’s father, uses to make the vase rotate like a top. With powerful thrusts, gasping and snorting like a steam engine, he makes the spinning top whirl around Max’s bed, together with “all the horrors my father is capable of evoking in an amiable panel of false mahogany by means of his frightful soft crayon.”⁹ Years later, in puberty, Ernst thought about his father’s behavior during the night of his own conception and became aware of this early

childhood hallucination, which from then on was retained by him in obsessive thoughts about his parents' coitus.

As is well known, this is also the subject of the primal scene. According to Freud, the child becomes witness to his parents' sexual intercourse and attempts to understand what is going on using the system of knowledge that has been put in place through his infantile sexual research into the origin of life and the difference between the sexes. The little observer understands the event as the aggression of the father and the castration of the mother, whom the child has previously considered a phallic being. The threat of castration, which has already been addressed to the child—for example, during his first attempts at masturbation—now seems to him to be particularly motivated as he witnesses its enactment by his father.

These are just a few suggestions to illustrate that Freud makes the essential currents of early childhood instinctual life (sexual research, the phallic woman, fear of castration, the Oedipus complex) converge in the primal scene and diverge from the primal scene into later instinctual life. As Freud found in his study on the Wolf Man, "It was not only a single sexual current that started from the primal scene, but a whole set of them . . . his sexual life was positively splintered up by it."¹⁰ Even more interesting than Ernst's ingenious rendering of this theme—which elicits (obvious) interpretations such as the equation of frottage with masturbation¹¹—is his poetics of the primal scene. If one follows the published hallucination to the later declarations, the primal scene becomes the conceptual origin of his art. The (problematic) historicity of the primal scene, its deferred action,¹² serves Ernst as a model for the non-simultaneity of his own pictures.¹³

The primal scene is deferred because its effect is not solely or primarily attributable to the perception of the event but rather to the "activation of the scene" in later years.¹⁴ In the famous dream that the Wolf Man remembers from the age of four or five—six or seven white wolves sitting in a walnut tree—Freud recognizes the (greatly distorted) primal scene, which the patient probably witnessed at the age of one and a half. Freud defends this latter point, that the primal scene is based on the actual witnessing of the event and is not a fantasy projected back in time, with great argumentative vigor. Although the event and its witnessing come into psychic power only after the fact through the activation of the scene in later dreams, hallucinations, or obsessions, does the primal scene nevertheless mark an unconditional beginning? No: when observed from an even more

distant, pre-individual past, the event and its witnessing prove to be the activation of a still more ancient scene. According to Freud, the primal scene is part of the phylogenetic inheritance of the human psyche. That is, in the depths of prehistory, it was once in fact witnessed and from then on has been preserved as a mold that reshapes the contingent experience of the child (who may have never witnessed his parents' intercourse but maybe that of two dogs, for example). "All that we find in the prehistory of neuroses is that a child catches hold of this phylogenetic experience where his own experience fails him. He fills the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth; he replaces occurrences in his own life by occurrences in this life of his ancestors."¹⁵

The construction of Ernst's childhood hallucination adheres to the deferred action exemplified by the Wolf Man's dream but displays significant differences. The artist's account, like that of Freud's patient, tells not of direct witnessing but of its distorted activation years later; in addition, both the dream and hallucination contain thematic indications that they are referring to visual perception, though to different modes of seeing.

I dreamt that it was night [said the Wolf Man] and that I was lying in my bed. (My bed stood with its foot towards the window; in front of the window there was a row of old walnut trees. I know it was winter when I had the dream, and night-time.) Suddenly the window opened of its own accord, and I was terrified to see that some white wolves were sitting on the big walnut tree in front of my window.¹⁶

The opening of the window concurs with the surrealists' use of the window as the metaphor for a compulsive, illusionistic image that allows a view of an externalized inner world. Also, the drawing that the Wolf Man made of his dream vision (fig. 44) corresponds to the naive, seemingly careless, and thus authentic approach to painting that Ernst attempted in his image notations rapidly applied to a roll of paper (fig. 25). As we have seen, the frottages are the product of an engagement with the critique of these types of pictures, which Max Morise granted only secondary significance, since they refer to mental images—the real surrealist images—that preceded them. In order to dispel this suspicion and to connect automatism directly with his procedure, Ernst began to investigate imaginative seeing. Imaginative seeing suffused rubbed depictions with resemblances, made dead traces into simulacra of nature.

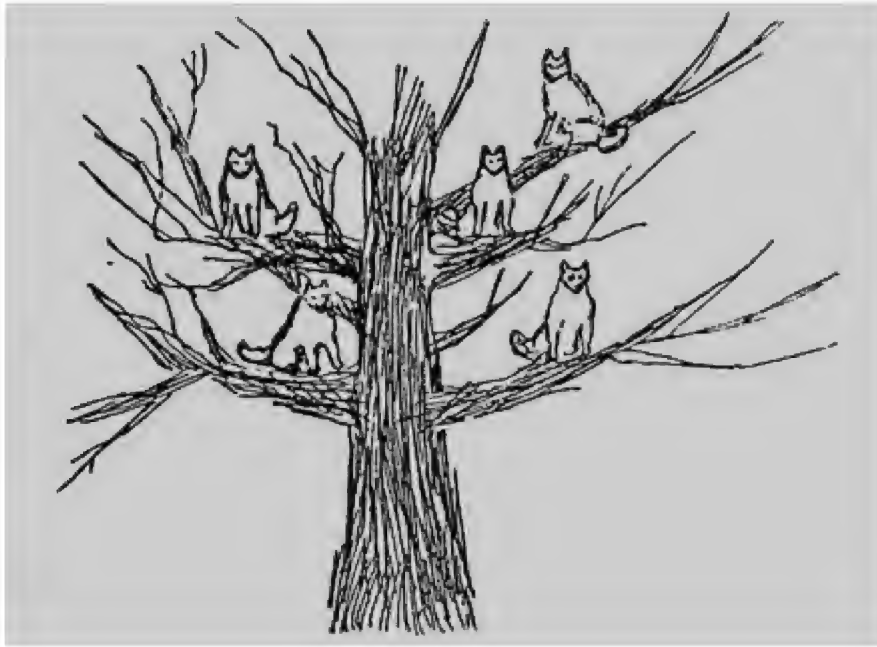


FIGURE 44
Drawing
of the Wolf
Man's dream
from Sigmund
Freud, *Aus
der Geschichte
einer infantilen
Neurose*
(1918).

Accordingly, Ernst's childhood hallucination corrects the Wolf Man's dream, as well as his approach to drawing. The window opened as if by a ghostly hand is replaced by the seeing of resemblances in wood grain. The imitation mahogany once again invokes the positive value of the false and the secondary, which the surrealist reflections on illusion and resemblance (e.g., Breton's rust stain in an old newspaper) had always celebrated.¹⁷ Later, in his manifesto "How to Force Inspiration," Ernst explicitly brings the false mahogany into connection with Leonardo's famous stains on the wall. In "Visions of Half-Sleep," the document of an infantile trauma, this type of historical comparison would be out of place. But the allusion to Freud's freshly translated study of Leonardo, which was advertised in the same issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, may not have been lost on his surrealist friends and other knowledgeable readers.¹⁸ This allusion underscores the surrealists' ambition to provide an independent, in many aspects divergent, contribution to the new science of psychoanalysis. Specifically, among all the psychopathologically useful evidence from Leonardo's life, paintings, and writings, Freud leaves unmentioned the famous passage in the *Treatise on Painting*

in which the master directs his students to exercise their imaginative powers by looking for images in stains on the wall.¹⁹ In competition with the famous screen memory of da Vinci's phallic mother as a vulture, which Freud analyzed, Ernst presents an entirely different psychoanalytic document that introduces the origins of his own art and simultaneously stages them: a hallucination, provoked by imitation mahogany (instead of a stained wall), from out of which the seeing of resemblances retrieves a more ancient image, the primal scene. In this way, Ernst presents the deferred image, which comes from the past but only gains its power through present activation, as a model for his poetics of frottage (and grattage); and at the same time, he supplements or corrects Freud's "Leonardo da Vinci."

On the level of motif as well, there are many associations that connect Ernst's primal scene with frottage. As has already been observed,²⁰ the many reversible images concealed in *Natural History* refer to a psychoanalytic thesis that was particularly attractive to the surrealists: that reversible images were painting's own parapraxes in which the painter's unconscious revealed itself. Oskar Pfister saw a vulture in the folds of fabric in Leonardo's *Anna Selbdritt*²¹ and compelled Freud—who received this confirmation of his own theses with a certain skepticism—to publish it in the second edition (1919) of his Leonardo study. Among many grotesque animal forms,²² *Natural History* abounds with concealed images of birds.²³ For example, fossil traces of avian creatures can easily be made out in *Whip Lashes or Lava Threads* (fig. 31). Christa Lichtenstern has already observed that this print thematizes frottage;²⁴ moreover, in the context of Ernst's reception of Freud, this print is noteworthy in its fixation of the primal scene as a prehistoric fossil.

In "How to Force Inspiration," Ernst derives further poetological implications from the association of prehistory, the primal scene, and frottage. He shifts his account of the discovery of frottage to the specific situation of a rainy day in a hotel room near the beach.

Beginning with a memory from childhood (related above) in the course of which a panel of false mahogany, situated in front of my bed, had played the role of optical *provocateur* of a vision of half-sleep, and finding myself one rainy evening in a seaside inn, I was struck by the obsession that showed to my excited gaze the floor-boards upon which a thousand scrubblings had deepened the grooves.²⁵

The childhood memory encounters a present inducement through which the hallucinations of individual prehistory are activated. But the inducement, the floorboards of his hotel room, refers to another deep time that precedes individual prehistory: namely, the time it has taken for thousands of scrubblings to deepen the grooves in the wood grain and give potency to their suggestive power. Ernst implies this analogy between the “thousand scrubblings” and the slowness of natural processes by saying his discovery was made on a rainy day near the beach: outside, the rising and falling of waves, erosion and accretion; inside, the traces of “a thousand scrubblings.” Surrounded by the deep-time processes of nature and anonymous labor, the artist encounters hallucinations from his own individual deep time. Thus, Ernst also integrated into his mythopoetics of frottage and grattage Freud’s theory that the primal scene as an event and a direct experience is not only determined after the fact, but is also preformed by the prehistoric past. In this way, he suggests ascribing to surrealist images a particular temporality: they come into being in the encounter of infantile hallucination and deep-time erosion, of individual and geologic prehistory.

For the reasons outlined above, Ernst refrained from making any reflective statements about his procedure in 1927. This decision accentuated a literary effect of his “Visions of Half-Sleep”—its Ubu-esque comedy—which would be lost in the declaration of 1933. While the Wolf Man’s account bespeaks the terror of a nightmare, and Leonardo’s screen memory approaches an erotic mystery, Ernst’s father—with his drawing, gasping, and whipping—is a figure from Alfred Jarry’s imagination. This grotesque manifestation allows the primal scene to exhibit a lesser degree of distortion in “Visions of Half-Sleep” than it does in the Wolf Man’s dream. Ernst avails himself of what Freud describes as a characteristic of childhood fantasies: that they take revenge on the father with “marvellous persiflage” and “caricatures.”²⁶ The surrealist and his father both work with pre-morphic grounds and provoke the viewer to see resemblances. The origin of surrealist painting lies in Ernst’s trumping up²⁷ his father’s art as an origin, while his father (who dabbled as a late romantic painter) could have only understood this tribute as mockery. This parody of a homosocial Oedipal identification contrasts markedly with the artist whom Ernst, and after him many other surrealists, considered as one of their own—Freud’s Leonardo da Vinci.

It is obvious why Freud’s biographical essay on Leonardo was seductive to the surrealists, presenting as it did an artist who held his craft in little esteem

because he was looking for higher knowledge, and who generally exemplified the treatment of sexual life as a model for artistic and intellectual development. (Less attractive features, such as sexual asceticism and emotional indifference, were ignored). However, Ernst's childhood memory depicts a fantasy entirely different from Leonardo's screen memory: while the latter, according to Freud's interpretation, implies the homosexual desire of a boy neglected by his father, in the former, the father makes his appearance with the full impact, and the imposing mustache,²⁸ of a Wilhelmine *pater familias*. While Leonardo's vulture, which thrusts its tail into the child's mouth, embodies the artist's phallic mother, Ernst's mother plays only a passive, supporting role in the figure of the vase that his father fills with pictures and then spins like a top. In comparison with Freud's Leonardo, the Oedipal situation is normalized. The artist-to-be develops and asserts himself against the superior competition of his father by first making his father laughable, in order then to take the fat crayon into his own hand, to conjure new monsters out of amorphic grounds.

Must Ernst's "Visions of Half-Sleep" consequently be read as an ideal mythology of masculinity, which styles the avant-garde artist as the enemy and successor of his father, in a contracted Oedipus complex from which the mother has virtually disappeared? Does Ernst not affirm the homosocial conception that the artist must emerge victorious from a father/son conflict beyond the mother, in order to found a new fraternal regime?²⁹ Surely, the boundaries of surrealism are thus addressed, though it remains to be shown how Ernst operates within them. The Ubu-esque comedy of the first half-asleep hallucination should be brought to mind once more, since it hollows out the homosocial myth. If, as Michel de Certeau has observed, Freud's studies of artists' biographies critically invert the bourgeois cult of the individual and present its mask,³⁰ regarding Ernst's use of this mask, it could be said that his Oedipus makes faces.

LEONARDO'S OEDIPUS; OR, HOW MAX ERNST REWRITES HIS FAMILY ROMANCE

Besides this one hallucination, "Visions of Half-Sleep" gives an account of two others, to which little attention has been paid in the scholarship. The subsequent hallucinations allow another Oedipus to come forward—Leonardo's Oedipus. In the second section, titled "At the Age of Puberty," Ernst tells of another vision

he had while half asleep: a procession of normally dressed women and men appear on a distant horizon and advance toward Max's bed. Before they arrive, they divide into two groups, women going to the right and men to the left. At first, Max is struck by the youth of the women, but on closer inspection, only a few of them—two or three—prove to be young enough for the adolescent observer. Without looking to the other side, he knows for sure that he would commit the opposite error in observing the men. At first, all the men would seem frighteningly old, but after closer scrutiny, his father would be singled out as the only truly elderly man. Again, the primary thematic concern is seeing as scopophilia, a passive activity, as was also diagnosed in the study of the Wolf Man.³¹ The approach of the men and women from a great distance is a surrealist perspectivization, which could well be understood, with Freud, as the representation of their origin in the depths of childhood.³² In fact, the men and women are initially associated with the parents as models of future object choice, at whom Oedipal love (the youth of the women) and Oedipal hatred (the age of the men) are directed. However, his curious gaze and the persistent pleasure he takes in looking allow the adolescent Max to break the spell of fascination with his parents, to leave behind his father as a senile old man, and to turn his interests away from his aged mother toward younger women. After the early childhood hallucination has presented scopophilia as the source of fear of the father, in puberty this same pleasure in looking gives the adolescent the power to break out of the Oedipal family triangle.

The third vision, dated January 1926—thus the time at which he had just completed the frottages of *Natural History*—shows Ernst lying stretched out on his bed, at the foot of which a tall, slender woman is standing upright. The woman and her red dress are transparent, so that it is possible to observe the surprising fineness of her skeleton. Scopophilia, which has now achieved absolute mastery in the motif of transparency, finds its supreme object in a woman standing erect, a phallic woman who, in a state of perfect surrender to the passive artist's gaze, is herself a figure of the flawless (not castrated) perfection of the visible.³³ While his childhood was governed by a normal Oedipus complex, as an adult, Ernst has caught up with Leonardo. According to Freud's analysis, Leonardo owed his free, investigative character to a phallic woman, the single mother who had not restricted or punished his infantile sexual research with paternal authority. While in the early childhood hallucination, Ernst's mother disappears in the form of the

mistreated vase, a new woman now appears, an erect and transparent figure who embodies visual perfection in accordance with surrealist scopophilia. In this way, Ernst suggests how his “instinctual vicissitudes” have led directly to frottage and grattage—namely, two artistic procedures that place seeing above making, and thus the artist’s passivity above his activity; and as the precondition of this passivity, he presents a figure of psychoanalytic mythology, the phallic woman, who, as a form, simultaneously constitutes the surrealist visual field. As the key figure of “Visions of Half-Sleep,” the phallic woman points to *Natural History*, which likewise ends in a threshold figure of transparency, Eve/Gala. Ernst thus suggests a teleological reading, which, against the intractable aspects of the natural history, accentuates the latter’s progressive development, with the end result that opacity is overcome by transparency. However, the common objective of text and picture series—the upright woman as the promise of a perfect visuality—only comes into appearance through her being marked as the function of a mortifying and petrifying gaze. In “Visions,” the female apparition clearly takes on her glassy transparency for the sake, and through the effect, of the pleasure that Ernst takes in looking. In *Natural History*, as has been discussed, it is the light of a preceding flash that will have already transfixed Eve and her shadow. It is well known that Ernst lauded frottage as a procedure that dethrones the artist as creator and relinquishes him to his passivity. In both of these optical effects—transparency and the flash—a mortification is revealed that always preconditions surrealism. In order to constitute the artist’s passive pleasure in looking, the woman first has to be hardened into a glassy figure or transfixed in a magnesium flash. Only her becoming inorganic makes her a surrealist being.³⁴ After the Dadaist overpaintings have dismantled the woman as the naturalistic origin of artistic creativity, have stratified, and finally buried her in a landscape marked by mechanical/distorting repetition (plate 1), in the surrealist frottages she appears as a form that promises a fully transparent visuality, though under the condition that she is transfixed and mortified by a preceding gaze.

THE LIQUEFACTION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The progression of “Visions of Half-Sleep” can be summarized as follows: through scopophilia, to which he owes his first, traumatic hallucination, Max Ernst is able to gain a new, phallic mother not castrated by his father and thus

arrive at the threshold of a new unconscious. Although Ernst read Freud earlier, more extensively, and in 1927 probably better than André Breton did,³⁵ he evidently shared Breton's conviction that the unconscious is not so "unyieldingly rigid" as Freud describes it.³⁶ For the surrealists, Freud's intractable unconscious harbored a conceptual danger—the same danger that was assumed in the conception, established in French psychology, of automatism as a primitive function of the human psyche that tended toward mere repetition.³⁷ From the perspective of the young poets, this threat was always especially tangible when the "magic dictation" of automatic writing and other practices devoted to the unconscious yielded unsatisfactory results—that is, poetic commonplaces. In 1933 Breton made reference to the "continual misfortune"³⁸ of automatism, and in 1928 Louis Aragon even spoke of a "inexhaustible diarrhea."³⁹ As early as 1924, shortly after the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, they both made note in the logbook at surrealist headquarters that some surrealist texts were of questionable value.⁴⁰ This banal, intractable force of repetition, which the surrealist poets had not escaped, could be attacked polemically; but also through keeping phenomena of repetition, emaciation, and mortification insistently in view, it could be held at bay and thus glossed over. In Breton's automatic texts, poetic commonplaces, narrative clichés, and motifs of surrogates (such as a rusty imprint in an old newspaper) form a mask-like surface in which the automatic language establishes itself as a relatively uncontrolled textual event. As was extensively demonstrated in the second chapter, the material often originates in childhood and thus is intended to lead back to the time when the unconscious was still in what Freud termed a "lava-like" aggregate state.⁴¹ In the *Manifesto*, surrealism is thus heralded as a movement that discovers in childhood a space of unlived possibilities and makes these possibilities available.⁴² Thus, Freud's conviction of the "unyieldingly rigid" unconscious was by no means repressed or denied;⁴³ rather, it was thought of as a competing conception, against which the surrealist revolution was directed, as against the petrification of social conditions. Surrealism's definitive fantasy was the rediscovery of the lava-like plasticity of the infantile, prehistoric unconscious. Ernst's surrealist pictures could be understood as instruments of this softening: frottage is after all a child's technique that fills the hard crusts of prehistory with simulacra of growth. Frottage provokes a seeing of resemblances that makes even rock strata, section lines, dead wood grain, or grooves in dried paint oscillate, and transforms them in a wave-like motion.

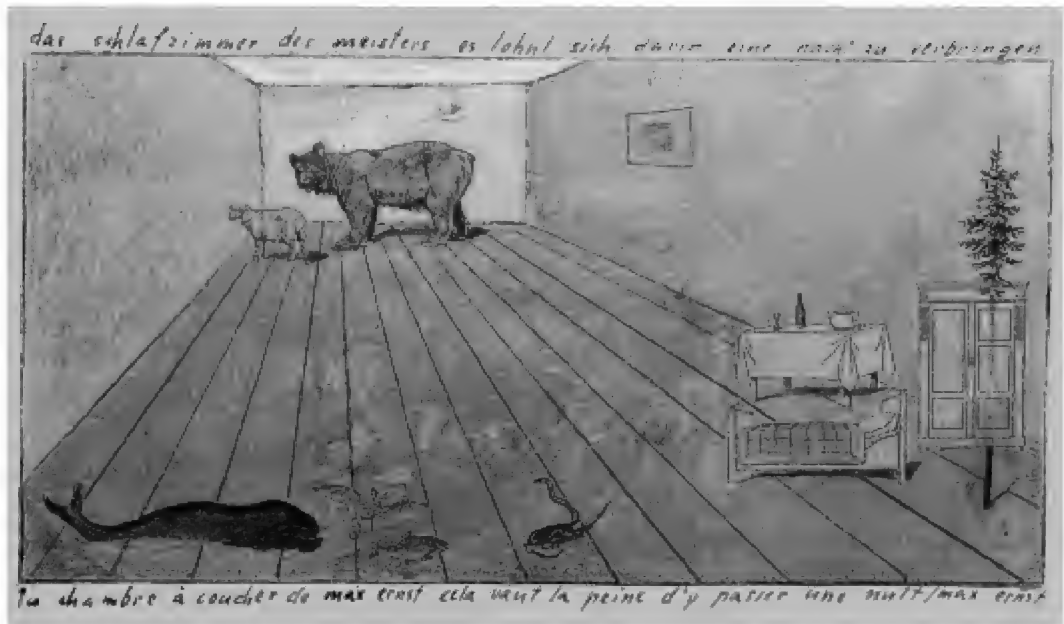


FIGURE 45

Max Ernst, *The Master's Bedroom* (*das schlafzimmer des meisters*), ca. 1920. 16.3 × 22 cm, collage, gouache and pencil. Private collection (S/M no. 399). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Since the seeing of resemblances only becomes a characteristic pictorial effect in the frottages, these works' conception of the unconscious must fundamentally differ from that of the Dadaist pictures, as well as that of the paintings that developed out of the Dadaist pictures in the years 1921–24. Rosalind Krauss has dedicated a fascinating analysis to the overpainting *The Master's Bedroom* (*das schlafzimmer des meisters*) of 1920 (figs. 45, 46), which will be presented more extensively in what follows. Her insights, but also her blind spots, provide the impetus for a better understanding of the differences between Dada and surrealism, with regard to each one's conception of the unconscious.

As is well known, Krauss's thoughts on Ernst are formulated within the context of her critique of the modernist ideal of opticality. The correlative of this purified perception is a type of artwork distinguished by sensual presence and structural transparency. By contrast, the optical unconscious is constituted out of that which is repressed by modernism: simply stated, the optical unconscious

to the outer film of the “mystic writing pad,” the unconscious is comparable to the waxy ground, which, even after the visible drawing has been erased, remains imprinted with a mesh of traces. Further pursuing the analogy between psychic apparatus, mystic writing pad, and Ernst’s overpaintings, Krauss writes that the wax tablet of the pad corresponds to the underlying page from the teaching aids catalog, whose inventory-like array of objects can be compared with the stored contents of unconscious memory. Meanwhile, the mystic writing pad’s surface, which can be written on, is analogous to the overpainting, especially since the latter’s skin-like thickness seems to suggest that it could be detached from the ground, as can the outermost layer of the pad. On the basis of this point of comparison, Krauss arrives at a further implication of Freud’s apparatus: that the alternation between drawing and erasing stands for “the discontinuity of the current of innervation,”⁴⁶ thus, for the periodicity of perception, pulsing between on and off. Now, this pulsing movement is not illustrated in *The Master’s Bedroom*; rather, in the motionlessness of the picture, “the sense of the gap, the detachment, the split that results from the pulse,” comes into view.⁴⁷ Krauss relates this interval, split, or lack—which opens up in a discontinuous perception alternating between on and off, and which is registered in the frozen emptiness of Ernst’s overpaintings—to lack *par excellence*; that is, to castration. The climax of her thesis, castration’s correspondence to the off function of perception, is achieved when she points out that Ernst’s overpainting refers to the most extensively discussed image of castration fear, the drawing made by Freud’s Wolf Man (fig. 44). Krauss is not interested in similarities of form or of motif that could likewise be demonstrated: both depict animals; the intensity of the gaze in the dream picture is transferred to the perspective in the overpainting; what’s more, in the study of the Wolf Man, Freud comments, “The whale and the polar bear, it has been said, cannot wage war on each other, for since each is confined to his own element they cannot meet.”⁴⁸ Instead, Krauss places the deferred action of the image at the center of her considerations. The Wolf Man’s dream vision contains prefabricated motifs (such as the fairy tale of the wolf and the seven young goats, which the child’s grandfather told to him) in order to activate and to distort the image of the primal scene. Ernst’s technique of overpainting relates similarly to the overpainted readymade. As a stock of motifs, the page from the *Cologne Catalogue of Teaching Aids* can be equated with the recent material (Freud’s “residue of the day”) that the dream vision processes and distorts. In addition,

in its ordered arrangement, it refers to a preceding image matrix: the serial production of images. In the overpainting, this is given a deferred activation, like the repetition of the matrix of the primal scene in the Wolf Man's dream vision.

Deferred action is in fact a central concept for understanding Ernst's art (indeed, it had already served as the principle of construction for his "Visions of Half-Sleep"). Other aspects of Krauss's interpretation warrant a more critical assessment. Her analysis of *The Master's Bedroom* calls attention to the problem of how the deferred pictoriality of the frottages, which the artist so ingeniously stages in his "Visions of Half-Sleep," can be distinguished from that of the overpaintings. This problem was of little concern to Ernst the surrealist, who endeavored to unify his works poetologically. In the 1930s, he asserted that like his surrealist pictures, his Dadaist pictures could also be attributed to visual parapraxes. They were also hallucinations, provoked by the diversity and incommensurability of the motifs assembled on a single page of the teaching aids catalog. However, this poetics in accordance with the model of frottage and grattage belies a particular characteristic of the Dada pictures: namely, the rigidity of their surfaces, which is not only displayed by the pictures with a geologic theme. *The Master's Bedroom* is also covered by a hard, solidified film, which does not readily lend itself to interpretation via the instability of visual parapraxes. The frottages are different: they elicit a metamorphic seeing and thus lend themselves to comparison with hallucinations.

It seems to me that the hard surface of the overpaintings does not give rise to the association with a detachable skin, as Krauss proposes so that she can then attempt the analogy with Freud's mystic writing pad. The frottages are more suited to this comparison, if it actually needs to be made. In any case, in my view, the formation of analogies between pictures and artistic procedures, on the one hand, and psychic models and processes, on the other, is far more complicated. Of course, I would not deny that it has been illuminating to relate Ernst's artistic devices and the work of the unconscious to one another.⁴⁹ But beyond this drawing of analogies, the way in which these analogies relate to the pictures must be examined. The relationship is very different according to whether the Dadaist or surrealist pictures are at issue.

The analogy between overpainting as an artistic procedure and the psychic process of repression and the distorted return of the repressed can be referred back to Freud's own geologic metaphors, which is closely connected to his

more well-known metaphors of archaeology and prehistory. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, a work probably known to Ernst, Freud states, “The architectonic principle of the mental apparatus lies in a stratification—a building up of superimposed agencies.”⁵⁰ When the mimetic similarity between artistic procedures and the unconscious as the production context is too strongly emphasized, Ernst’s pictures are made into transparent display cases. The association of “overpainting/geological layering/layers of the psyche” only emerges after the perspective has been narrowed to such an extent that the procedural deception (overpainting disguised as collage), the competing metaphorical condensations (not just layering, but also stage sets, stacking, anatomy), and the accentuated dissimilarity (sublime nature as opposed to intricate bricolage) have fallen out of view. Simultaneously, it is necessary to stress that in the overpaintings, psychoanalytic analogies meet the same fate as geologic, theatrical, or mechanical ones: their semantic power of integration breaks down amidst the distorting repetition that determines the relationship of image and underlay. As I attempted to show in chapter 1, this is the case for all metaphors of artistic production, and thus also psychoanalytic ones.

While in the Dada pictures, every analogy produces difference, in the frottages, artistic technique and naturalistic process work together. Frottage and fossilization form a metaphor whose totalizing effect is additionally enhanced through non-resemblance (swift technique, slow nature). This makes the frottages more accessible to further metaphorizations, which Ernst undertakes in his writings. In “Visions of Half-Sleep” and with declarative directness in “How to Force Inspiration,” he draws the comparison between accidental, naturalistic images, the seeing of resemblances, and hallucination. In the edition of *La Révolution surréaliste* that printed “Visions” as well as the French translation of *The Question of Lay Analysis*, the reader is also encouraged to conceive of frottage as a model of the psychic apparatus—not through comparison with the mystic writing pad (about which, in 1927, the surrealists may not yet have known), but on the basis of the metaphor of the cortex (*Rinde*), which Freud uses in *The Question of Lay Analysis* to demonstrate his theorem of the ego as a surface.⁵¹ This idea that the conscious comes into being on the toughened surface of the psychic apparatus can easily be transferred to Ernst’s frottages and, even more, to his grattages. Their pictorial surfaces are exposed to underlying layers and destabilized by them. While Freud describes the cortical toughening of the ego, Ernst’s

pictures show how these layers become cracked, begin to move, are carved into reversible images, are laid open to deeper layers.

The difference between the Dadaist and surrealist pictures, which Ernst glosses over in his attempts at poetological integration in the 1930s, points to a decisive turn in the artist's career, from a pictorial concept based on repetition and distortion in the Dada years, to the ghostly mimesis of the surrealist simulacra. This difference corresponds to a likewise profound breach in the conception of the unconscious. In the frottages and grattages, mortified traces transform into apparitions suffused with an eerie growth. Through the power of seeing resemblances, the fossil rigidity of the unconscious dissolves, gains metamorphic motility, sketches reversible images, and produces mysterious correspondences between textures and objects (as between the sea in the first print and the hair in the last of *Natural History*). To be sure, *Natural History* repeatedly leads back to mortification as the precondition of the surrealist seeing of resemblances, as finally in *Eve* (fig. 33), who seems transfixed by a gaze like a camera flash. This mortification and hardening is indeed the precondition of an unconscious imagined as a power that produces pictorial secrets. By contrast, the Dadaist overpaintings create zones of invisibility that do not suggest secrets. The underlay lies like a foreign body underneath the landscapes and is expressed in the landscapes predominantly in its reproducing itself as a grid, diagram, or stratification. The idea of the unconscious implied in these pictures is that of an underground that is expressed on the surface through distorting repetitions. In the next chapter, these contrasting readings of Dada and surrealism—distorting repetition versus haunting growth, repetitive versus productive unconscious, foreign body versus secret—will be reoriented around a new question: that of the historical traces in Ernst's pictures and the manner of their signification.

In advance, I would again like to raise the question of what makes Ernst's pictures into psychoanalytic pictures. The distinction proposed here between Dada and surrealism could be understood as the frottages' being influenced by psychoanalysis to a greater extent, since they can be brought into connection with particular psychoanalytic theses and metaphors in an unproblematic way. But is it not possible also to sketch another conception of psychoanalytic pictures, according to which pictures function not as repositories of psychoanalytic knowledge, but as its catalysts, setting in motion an unexpected and risky interpretation? The Dada pictures do this much more (and Krauss's interpretation is an outstanding

testament to this catalytic effect). Like the frottages, they attest to Ernst's reading of Freud. But unlike the frottages, they contain inner resistances against analogy formation, which also includes those analogies that would bring them into connection with psychic processes or the psychic apparatus. And this resistance compels us not to use psychoanalysis as a reservoir of images and analogies that can be applied to artworks, but in fact to attempt an analysis of these works, to work with their resistances.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND WAR TRAUMA

When André Breton admitted during a radio interview in 1952 that he had already discovered “the entirety of Surrealism’s raw materials” in the Great War, he was thinking of a certain “war neurotic” patient he had studied at the Saint-Dizier psychiatric clinic. The patient’s daredevil behavior on the front seemed motivated by his belief that the war was a gigantic hoax being staged for the purpose of deceiving him:

His arguments . . . and the impossibility of making him give them up made a great impression on me. I’ve often thought, after the fact, of the extreme point he represented on a line linking the speculations of an idealist such as Fichte to certain of Pascal’s radical doubts. There’s no doubt that for me a certain temptation originated there, which would see the light of day several years later in my “Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality.”¹

Breton’s much-criticized faith in the liberating power of the unconscious, which accounts for his fascination with the “war hysteric’s” surmounting of reality, can be related to his position as a psychiatric assistant during the war years. In this context, his stance can be read as a symptom-like aberration within the medical discourse on the war’s psychological victims. The “flight into illness” that Breton admired was analogous, on the part of the doctors, to a disciplinary interest in relativizing the reality of the war’s horrors. The minority of military psychiatrists who posited a physical explanation for the psychological breakdown of soldiers on the front were the only ones for whom the etiological significance of violence was indisputable.² The opposing thesis, that so-called “shell shock” was psychosomatically conditioned, had gained widespread support. As a consequence, the subject of inquiry could be expanded to include the constitutional susceptibility

of the war's psychological victims, the "disposition" that enabled one soldier to come back "steeled" from the front, while another came back with the shakes. In the framework of the psychosomatic theory, the individual's prehistory fell under the doctors' scrutiny as the primary factor that enabled a violent incident to become the cause of trauma. Accordingly, military psychiatry directed its therapeutic methods against the victims' "weakness of will" and cited a "pathological disposition" in order to deny pension claims. In this way, uncertainty about the significance that could be ascribed to violence was utilized for the justification of further violent acts.

Although psychoanalysis was aiming to prove itself within military psychiatry and ultimately to become institutionalized, the newer discipline was interested for entirely different reasons in the etiological devaluation of violent events. Following the widespread acceptance of the psychogenic explanation, psychoanalysis gained some recognition, expressed in a very selective reception of psychoanalytic terms, such as "flight into illness." But this acceptance was critically relativized since one of the basic convictions of psychoanalysis was considered disproven by the war neuroses. Specifically, the sexual basis of neuroses was controverted by the obvious indication that symptoms such as trembling, deafness, paralysis, or loss of sensation referred back to the mechanized events of war and the immediate trigger of the illness (explosion, burial, barrage lasting for many hours), and not to the fixation of early childhood sexual development.

In order to assert its scientific value, psychoanalysis was obliged to devalue the violent triggering incident by demonstrating its connection with the traumatizing sexual development of the child. When lecturing at the Fifth Psychoanalytic Congress in 1918 on the problem of war neuroses,³ Freud's pupils found themselves confronted by a similar challenge to the one Freud seemed to have mastered with "seduction theory" more than twenty years before: that is, the need to transform the outer violent incident into an inner conflict.⁴ This time the problem did not involve crimes conjectured to have taken place in the seclusion of the bourgeois bedroom. Instead, it involved the effects of an industrialized war, which, in their harrowing efficiency, made plain that "traumatic neuroses" could be considered a modern ailment, since their appearance was closely connected with the industrialization of both civil life and warfare.⁵ A problematic that was even more topical for the development of psychoanalytic theory was the primal scene, which also involved the relationship of psychic reality to con-

tingent events. As already mentioned, Freud decided that there was a necessary interplay between three figures: deferred activation, prehistoric preformation, and an accidental witnessing associated by metaphor (as in the copulating dogs) with parental intercourse, which was the primal scene's content.

Sándor Ferenczi's, Karl Abraham's, Ernest Jones's, and Georg Simmel's contributions to war neurosis attempted to divert attention away from the contingent event, toward sexual symptoms (impotence, homosexuality). On a theoretical level, they proposed conceiving of war trauma as a threat to narcissism.⁶ The mechanical effects of destruction and physical paralysis in modern trench warfare were not only traumatizing in themselves but moreover because of the infantile fixation of individual sexual development. Trauma as an industrially produced violent event converges with the psychic traumas of early childhood, which psychoanalysis understands as constitutive for sexuality. These traumas are based not on a single event but on the deferred relationship between two events. In his reading of Freud, Jean Laplanche summarizes this position as "primal deceit"—deceit, because a contingent event takes on a psychic power that it only possesses through referring to a previous event, which for its own part is also not the origin of traumatizing violence, since it only becomes this after the fact, when viewed from the perspective of the contingent event: "It may be said that, in a sense, trauma is situated entirely in the play of 'deceit' producing a kind of [rocking movement] between the two events. Neither of the two events in itself is traumatic; neither is a rush of excitation."⁷

By 1916 Breton had confirmed his support of psychoanalysis, despite a knowledge of Freud that was patchy at best. He may well have hoped to use psychoanalytic techniques to follow the war neurotic on his "flight into illness."⁸ The surrealists understood Freud's theory as a method by which the reality of violent events could be transferred into the "rocking movement" of the unconscious with its deferred activation.

Trauma establishes a historical referent in events that, on account of their violence, are unavailable to any type of experience. Current attempts to utilize psychoanalytic trauma theory for a better understanding of historical and artistic processes focus on the refusal to be integrated, the deferred activation, and the compulsive return of events or their traces in theoretical and artistic works.⁹ Within art history, discussions have been framed in terms of the trauma of photography, abstraction, or the avant-garde in general, in order to emphasize the

breaks and non-simultaneities of their reception.¹⁰ The current trend in which trauma is made to serve as a model for the event structure of all more or less violent incidents should, however, prompt one to assume a historicizing distance. It should be asked, which pictorial forms articulate (or obstruct) the conception of “world war as psychic trauma”? What does it mean for the art of the avant-garde that it understood and propagated its project as “traumatic”?

OEDIPUS IN THE TRENCHES; OR, SURREALIST LISTENING POSTS

Frottage is a procedure for the production of ahistorical pictures. Naturalistic remains, wooden boards, straw, string, leaves, and textured leather serve as a matrix. This difference from the Dadaist pictures, which the previous chapter attempts to illuminate from various angles, prompted Werner Spies to observe: “In place of a reproduced material located in a cultural no-man’s land, there now appears a raw material that had never been given expression in all of history or civilization. The textures that Max Ernst lays beneath the drawing paper are, in a manner of speaking, open, without history.”¹¹ This absence of history was the condition that the surrealists required in order to rewrite the prehistory of the human psyche. Iconographically, their psychic prehistory also does incorporate historical allusions. However, the interpretation of these allusions cannot be considered separately from the seeing of resemblances, to which the frottages subject all their themes.¹²

In *Fields of Honor, Flood, Seismic Plants* (*Les champs d’honneur, les inondations, les plantes sismiques*; fig. 47), the twelfth print of *Natural History*, the monumental clump sitting in the foreground is tilted slightly forward. To the right, its shadow, which would have the potential to ensure a certain spatial stability, melts into a sauce. When, in this sauce, the eye and snout of an animal become visible, the brightly illuminated space is transformed into an unstable terrain where appearances answer to the viewer’s gaze. The uncanny effect of the hidden shadow figure is yet surpassed by the amorphous growth that inflates the multiply domed surface of the rootless fruit and seems to push the whole thing out beyond the pictorial space.

Favorable conditions for this formless, animating seeing-in are created by the homogenous surface of the frottage, as well as its grainy facture and the unstable

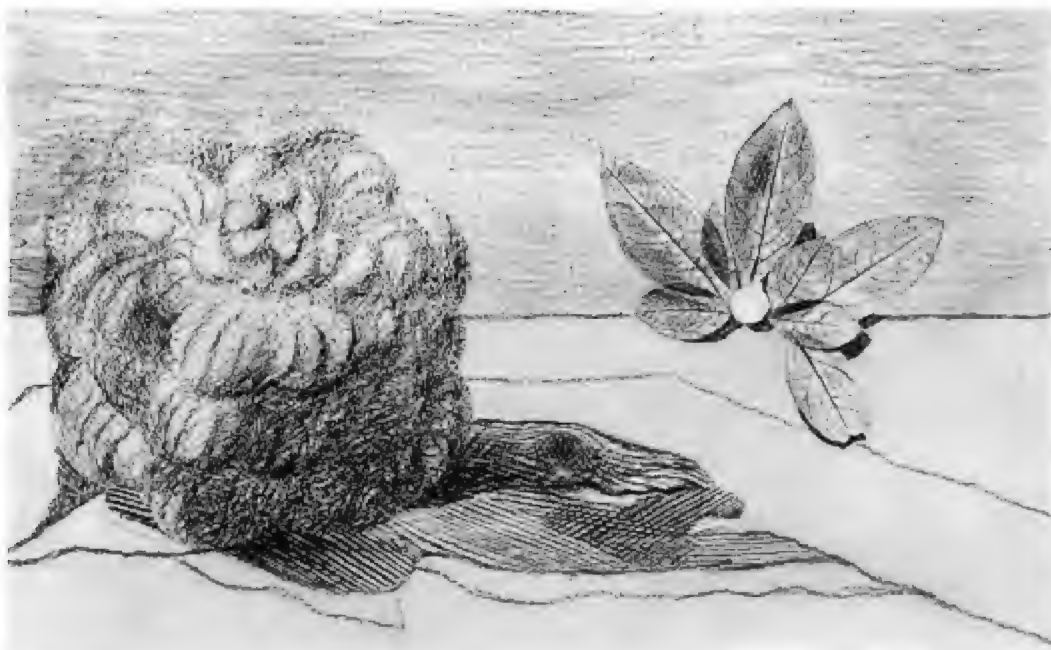


FIGURE 47

Max Ernst, *Fields of Honor, Flood, Seismic Plants* (*Les champs d'honneur, les inondations, les plantes sismiques*) (*Histoire naturelle*, print 12), 1925/26. 26.2 × 43 cm (measurement of image), photoengraving from frottage (S/M no. 801). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

size relationships, which generate a convulsively contracting and expanding space. In *Fields of Honor*, this space arises from the contrast between the agglomerated fruit and the second item of vegetation, positioned far away from it at the horizon line. This latter's shadows seem not in keeping with the optical effects of the landscape; rather, they seem to fall upon the drawing paper. Likewise, the detailed rendering of the veins contributes to seeing the laurel leaves as if they were not positioned in deep space, but instead were resting on the surface of the support. One might think that someone located outside of the picture had pinned a military decoration onto the picture's outer boundary—at the exact location, within the picture, of its inner boundary, the horizon. The horizon was an emblem of the surrealist movement, which aimed to go beyond perceivable reality.¹³

In or upon the surrealist picture—applied to it from outside or, better, tacked

on like the Iron Cross First Class that Ernst earned in the Great War¹⁴—there is a foreign body that provides the prehistoric world of Natural History with a historical reference. However, the surrealist picture aims to integrate this foreign body into its mode of functioning, or to transform the historical reference, which functions through metonymy (the war), into a metaphoric element. On a barren plateau, “seismic plants” meet “honors,” clumps meet laurel leaves, while both items of vegetation press forward and compete for the viewer’s gaze: one with its amorphous globules, the other with its hallucinatory sharpness. The military decoration intensifies the convulsive spatial dynamics of the surrealist picture, since it is its double position, both in deep space as well as on the surface, that overrides the natural relationships of near and far, large and small, in order to provoke the seeing of resemblances and thus to suffuse the enigmatic fossils with life. The historical reference is lost in this effect of the enigmatic that dominates the whole surrealist natural history.

Like Breton, who claimed to have achieved the “the entirety of Surrealism’s raw materials” from the study of trauma victims in the First World War, Ernst would also locate the origin of his surrealist identity in the war. In his autobiographical notes, which were first published during his exile in America—and which should be read in the context of the 1940s and the search, during this time, for a new surrealist myth—he writes: “Max Ernst died the first of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918 as a young man aspiring to become a magician and to find the myth of his time.”¹⁵ This laconic statement of death and rebirth brings into play an elementary motif of initiation rites, a familiar pattern in the fantasies of world war veterans. Veterans believed that the war was a mystery into which only they had been initiated; through the possession of its secrets, they were deeply estranged from those who had stayed at home.¹⁶ When one observes Ernst’s autobiography as a whole, this topos—that the trauma of war initiates its soldiers into secret knowledge—becomes connected with a more comprehensive, universal enigma: the riddle of Oedipus. Long before the war, the mythmaking apparatus that would be brought forth from the war was already fully developed. It appears in the memories of early childhood and puberty with which Ernst’s “Tissue of Truth, Tissue of Lies” (“Wahrheits- und Lügengewebe”) begins. These memories—his beloved bird’s dying on the same day that his little sister is born, or his father as a landscape painter who cuts down trees that disrupt the subject of his pictures,¹⁷ or the hallucination that

Ernst published in 1927 as “Visions of Half-Sleep”—can be read as traumas in the Oedipal mold.

Ernst’s autobiography thus performs a double movement in order to deflect the trauma of war as physical violence into the “rocking movement” of deferred activation: First, the war becomes a traumatic secret that grounds the artist’s surrealist identity; then it becomes a psychic trauma like the infantile traumas that have already been recounted in psychoanalytically encrypted anecdotes. The First World War is thus relativized as the origin of Ernst’s surrealist identity. The war does not make a singular cut but rather is related to his autobiography’s central type of event: that is, the Oedipal trauma and its manifold transformations, from the terror of the father to the bliss of the phallic woman.

Breton and Ernst both developed a traumatophilic conception of history in the shadow of World War II. In Ernst’s autobiographical notes, the two motifs that demonstrate this conception are World War I as the secret of surrealism and the trauma of war as a belated expression of preceding psychic traumas. Both of these motifs can be found as early as 1923 in a text by Louis Aragon. Intended to serve as the introduction to a projected literary history of the avant-garde in the aftermath of World War I, the text was published under the title “Agadir” in the proto-surrealist magazine *Littérature*.¹⁸ The port city of Agadir was the center of the Second Moroccan Crisis, which led the Entente and Germany to the brink of war. But for his generation, Aragon writes, “Agadir” was a magic word that fundamentally transformed the world. It expelled young people from their world of adventure novels and cast them into the adult world of historical events. As a word that itself seemed to come from an adventure story, a hermetic name formed from auspicious sounds, a child’s garbled “Arcadia,” it suddenly caused the opening, beyond the adolescent horizon, of the reality of military conflicts—from which, one is compelled to add, Aragon’s generation would never again be free. The mystery of “Agadir,” as Aragon explicitly writes, was the trauma that destroyed a world (that of childhood) and created a traumatomorph (that of the war and the avant-garde). “Agadir,” it can further be added, functions as a displacement that shifts the historical break of the war onto an incident that, through the contingent position it assumes in the biographies of Aragon’s generation, prefigures the significance of the war. And through this displacement, “Agadir” not only anticipates the break of 1914–18. Conversely, it also transports the enigma that still connects the sounds “Agadir” with the adolescent

world of adventure novels—which world these sounds destroyed—into the dark time of the war years. The enigmatic word that brought an end to a generation’s dreamy days of youth echoes in the labyrinth of the trenches and fills them with surrealist mysteries.

In Ernst’s autobiographical notes, in his *Natural History*, as well as in Aragon’s fragment “Agadir,” there occurs a traumatophilic back projection of the war. The war only accrues its significance in the “rocking movement” brought on by preceding traumas. For Aragon, his generation’s entry into manhood around 1912 is the critical caesura, while Ernst views the war as one phase in a psychic prehistory that proceeds in a concatenation of traumas from early childhood to the present. As a foreign body, the war only protrudes into the surrealists’ traumatophilic fantasies of history to the extent that it can be transformed into a mystery, similar to the sexual mysteries staged in psychoanalytic primal fantasies.¹⁹

DADA’S WORLD WAR

In the Dada pictures that Ernst made in Cologne in 1919–21, the years immediately following the war, there are numerous World War I motifs. Werner Spies observes that some of the machine pictures resemble artillery.²⁰ In these same pictures, Hal Foster examines the iconography of the woman as a destruction machine (fig. 6) and attempts a psychoanalytic interpretation following on Klaus Theweleit’s familiar theses.²¹ Ludger Derenthal is able to trace important sources for Ernst’s photo collages and document several historical references (such as to the bombardment of Reims).²² Out of a stratified Dada landscape, insignia emerge that bring to mind political-military groups such as the Freikorps, which was on the rampage during the postwar period.²³ In this context, the text “The Old Vivisector” (“der alte vivi-sektor”) is of particular interest, since it expresses the same fascination as was felt by the young André Breton for the “flight into illness” as a poetic form of desertion. “The Old Vivisector,” published in 1921 in the last great Dada manifesto, *Dada Outdoors* (*Dada au grand air*), depicts a conversation between a general and an adjutant. In the First World War, the new destructive potential of artillery and machine-gun positions compelled a defensively oriented trench war, in which long, grueling periods of waiting could suddenly erupt into clamorous chaos and destruction. The traditional hierarchies were preserved between officers and the rank and file, despite harsh criticism of the

officers' inadequate knowledge of the area, and the consequent dubious nature of their commands.²⁴ Ernst amplifies the collapse of the command situation, with first the adjutant and then the general setting off on a hallucinatory desertion:

There on that hill, cried the General, I see closely spaced infantry lines. Why was I not informed of them? They are caterpillar hunters and inflorescences, the Adjutant countered. And the artillery observation booths over there? Those are the adventitious buds on their runners. To the inside left is a strong battery of seemingly large caliber, said the commander again. We don't have anything like that. Your Excellency is exactly right: they are the bellies of the ovules, the digitigrades of the future, the limbs of ones who have been buried in the snow. They surpass the spores in beauty and clarity. They are thickly covered with root hairs. Their throat canals sport fine cilia. They hide their poisonous fangs in their women's tender parts. Breathing orifice (!) and assimilation threads by the thousands. Sundew from the bottom of the cup. Forward, the General answered. The shrinking of wall cells. The germination of spores. She's an inveterate drinker.²⁵

The botanist's language employed by the adjutant also takes possession of the general. This collagist's notion itself partakes in a specific historical plausibility. Here, as in most of his work, Ernst is using something prefabricated: the employment of a mixture of military and scientific language was escalating under the influence of the war. Here is an example from medicine:

These cells essentially originate in the well-known deposits of sanguification, the different bones including the marrow being the major garrison towns in adults. How easily and how quickly these leukocytes can be mobilized can be concluded from the time it takes to rush legions from the marrow into the veins as soon as the large telegraph system of the entails is stimulated.²⁶

Incorporated fragments of patriotic and militarized language also appear in several pictures' inscriptions—"rechtzeitig erkannte angriffspläne der assimilationzfäden auf die feste DADA 1:300000" (plans detected in the nick of time for assimilation threads to attack the DADA fortress 1:300,000), or "sodaliten schneeberger drückethäler rosinen und mandeln schlagen die eingeborenen mitteleuropas zu meerschäum und eilen nach stattgehabter denudation den ergebnissen in bester absicht voraus" (fig. 10) (sodalites shirkers snow-covered

mountain and valley dwellers raisins and almonds beat the natives of central Europe to sea foam and following advanced denudation hurry ahead of events with the best intentions).²⁷ Here, military diction enters into the service of Dada. “The natives of central Europe” can easily be identified as the Central Powers, and their conquerors, characterized as defeatist shirkers of military duty, valley dwellers, and hedonists (“raisins and almonds”) appear quite like the Dadaists, who are known to have first formed as a group in Zurich. Then there are titles such as *winterlandschaft: vergasung der vulkanisierten eisenbraut zur erzeugung der nötigen bettwärme* (Winter Landscape: Vaporization of the Vulcanized Iron Bride to Produce the Necessary Bed Warmth; fig. 15) and *Die Leimbereitung aus Knochen* (The Preparation of Bone Glue). These may have alluded to propaganda rumors according to which, in the German Reich, human cadavers were being industrially processed into raw materials. Simultaneously, these titles point to Ernst’s artistic technique: in *Winter Landscape*, to overpainting, and in *The Preparation of Bone Glue*, to collage.²⁸

This abundance of references to the First World War raises some previously unexamined questions. What meaning do such motifs take on in Ernst’s pictures, and in what way do these works process the time period of the war? It is tempting to make the assumption that the plentiful world war iconography of the Dada collages implies another understanding of history than the one sketched out in *Natural History*’s prehistorical frottages. That is, one might suppose that Ernst’s Dada pictures show a greater permeability to historical events than his surrealist pictures, in which history is completely absorbed into a psychoanalytically conceived deep time. Brigid Doherty has interpreted Berlin Dada along these lines, emphasizing its permeability to a traumatically experienced course of history.²⁹ According to her, the actions, drawings, and collages of George Grosz and John Heartfield are reproductions of shell shock. The violence in the trenches, duplicated by the methods of military psychiatrists, is carried over into the postwar period in order to denounce war as insanity and at the same time to satirize the desire for normalcy. The psychiatric establishment’s warning that “war neurotics” could use revolution as revenge upon their doctors was taken by the Berlin Dadas as an invitation to express themselves in exactly the way that was feared. This traumatophilic fascination with the literal return of violence is connected with the simultaneity ideal of cubism.³⁰ It is essentially different from surrealism, which attempts to metaphorize physical violence by catching it in a psychoanalytically woven net of meaning.

In the case of Ernst, however, every attempt at drawing a boundary between Dada and surrealism comes up against a critical difficulty, which I have not yet addressed. From a certain perspective, as Werner Spies and Rosalind Krauss have been able to demonstrate, the photo collages of the Dada period are understandable as paradigms of a genuinely surrealist visual poetics.³¹ As opposed to the Berlin Dadaists, who exhibit the constructive act, Ernst attempts to conceal his cuts through the source material (fig. 48). His photographically reproducing the photo collages gives rise to a seamless picture surface and a coloristic continuum of gray tones. By means of this technique, the incisions appear less as the interventions of an artist who cuts pictures apart, and more as cuts within the world, whose indexical depiction presents itself in the homogenous field of the photograph. Collage gains the status of a procedure that seems to dominate reality in order to excavate, within it, the hidden strata of surreality. If, in the Dada years, Ernst had already achieved the procedure that would also characterize his later surrealist works, the question as to the meaning of the numerous war motifs becomes somewhat more complicated than in the case of the Berlin Dadaists. Let us examine one of these proto-surrealist collages more closely.

In *The Chinese Nightingale* (*die chinesische nachtigall*; fig. 48), the photo of a French aircraft bomb lying in a field serves as both the pictorial ground (field) and the main motif (bomb).³² The ninety-degree rotation through which Ernst raises the picture into the vertical can be described as the definitive operation, in that the picture as a whole consists of arrested, potential, and actual circular movements: the rotation of the bomb corresponds to the opened fan, which in turn is answered by the folded wing of the bird's body, below. The rotation motif is set in motion by the two arms in their serpentine twining around the vertical body, in a dance that draws the viewer into a pulsating space. Two artistic devices accentuate this seductive spatial dynamic of spreading open and folding shut: one is the rotation of the grassy ground from the horizontal into the vertical format, and the other is the distribution of light and shadow.

The grassy ground—which Ernst retouches with pen, especially on the right side of the picture, to transform it into a convoluted thicket—intensifies the seductive gestures of the arms. It is particularly unsettling that in the left half of the picture, where the thicket is shown close up, the feminine arm sinks into it, while to the right, where the blades of grass become smaller, their mass more intricate, and the focus blurred, the arm extends beckoningly toward the viewer.

FIGURE 48
Max Ernst,
*The Chinese
Nightingale*
(*die
chinesische
Nachtigall*),
1920. 12.2
× 8.8 cm,
collage and
ink on paper,
mounted on
board. Private
collection
(S/M no.
376). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.



To the left, the Chinese nightingale nestles into the ground; to the right, she seems to detach herself from it; above, through the fan she is firmly anchored in the visual field; below, she seems to float freely. Meanwhile, her appearance seems to be bathed in the unreal, fluctuating light of the theater stage, which illuminates each body part from a different side. In this way, so much material plasticity is divested that even the bomb seems unstable, its objecthood nearly reverting to a pre-object status.

These qualities of space—its pulsing between near and far, large and small, light and dark, stabilization and instability—distinguish some of the photo collages of the Dada years and are reinvented, after a time, in the frottages. Once again, it is important to emphasize the condition of their effectiveness: none of these changes in quality is allowed to harden into discontinuity, since the picture or the chimera can only enact its seductive play when protected by the picture surface, and in the continuum of the photographic gray scale. Under this condition, which likewise is only to be found again in frottage with its homogenized facture,³³ a foreign body can be applied to the picture. What can be said of the tacked-on laurel leaves in *Les champs d'honneur* can also be said of the eye in *The Chinese Nightingale*: both elements are firmly positioned in the pictorial space at the same time as they thrust forward to the picture surface.

The eye appears firmly positioned because it, more clearly than all the other pictorial elements, mutates into an organ of the aircraft bomb. In contrast to the arms, the wing, or the fan, which are set apart from the body by a spaceless distance, the eye actually sits within the surface of the bomb. But this same effective animation—the dud (*Blindgänger*) is staring at us—allows the eye to be perceived as an apotropaic object thrusting toward the picture surface, which, though it cannot go so far as to interrupt the seductive movement of the picture, is able to associate this movement with a threat. There are three operations that make the eye into a foreign body:

1. It is the only pictorial element that remains a perfectly distinct object whose boundaries do not merge into those of a neighboring element (by contrast, one observes how arms and wing, fan and bomb fit into one another).
2. The cutout eye has been rotated 180 degrees, as a result of which it has hardened into a reflective surface that opposes the rotational movement

in the pictorial space. A woman's darkly shadowed gaze, implying a mysterious interior, is transformed into the impenetrable and aggressive gazelessness of a bird's eye.³⁴

3. Only in the motif of the eye is the cut marked as a cut through the source material. Both the photograph and the form of the eye have been cut—it is a cutout eye in a double sense, since the cut separates an existing eye motif, while this same cut produces an eye. In other words, the line of the cut imitates what is being cut out, or the indexical trace imitates the icon.³⁵ For the viewer, this relationship is inverted: the photographed eye cannot be perceived independently from the cutout eye; the destructive action that has created the latter transfers itself to the former by connecting the aggressive staring of the animalistically inverted eye with the semantics of cut and blinding, Medusa and castration.

Evidently, as the fairy-tale title *The Chinese Nightingale*³⁶ also suggests, this mechano-feminine monster has emerged from a regression to the infantile conflicts and fixations that psychoanalysis describes.³⁷ The arsenal of industrialized war is transformed into a chimera that conceals a sexual secret and simultaneously keeps watch with a punishing glare. The foreign body that deflects the rotational movement into convulsive space does so in service to the Oedipal arcana. Virtually automatically, an interpretation is brought into effect that refers back to the myth of the phallic woman as well as to the power of seduction and castration that emanates from her. This interpretation allows the bird, whose contours are hidden between the right forearm and bomb's right fin,³⁸ to be deciphered as a symptom . . . et cetera. I will stop here, in order to relate the fact that the picture elicits this type of interpretation back to the question posed at the beginning, as to *The Chinese Nightingale's* reference to history. The answer must be that the picture's proto-surrealist procedural logic articulates a proto-surrealist historical fantasy. As in the frottages, which arise as an immediate reaction to Breton's first *Manifesto* and its outlined poetics of automatism, in the photo collages, too, the world war has the character of an infantile/sexual trauma. Instead of exploding and causing shell shock, the surrealist bomb unleashes its effect in the rocking movement of deferred action. The exceptionally absorptive power of this conception of trauma is demonstrated in that the photo collages, unlike the

frottages, contain numerous world war motifs, but they are reshaped into elements of a psychoanalytic iconography.

For the onlooker not yet practiced in the mode of viewing convulsive space, what at first glance appears to be a foreign body—the laurel insignia or the eye—proves within the picture to be an index for a secret that lures the viewer, without its meaning ever becoming accessible. But how do these forbidden secrets come into being? What underlies them? A particular content, or even a key, is not to be found. Within Ernst's Dada works, however, a structural correspondence can be ascertained between the photo collages, which produce dangerous secrets, and another group of pictures, the geological overpaintings. The overpaintings also contain and are in themselves foreign bodies, which resist absorption by a pulsating space and the fantasizing seeing that corresponds to it.

Madam Hostess on the Lahn, guardian angel of the Germans, thine is the industry anatomy paleontology grant us thy jubilation (*frau wirtin an der lahn, schutzensgelerin der deutschen, dein ist die industrie anatomie paläontologie schenk uns deine frohlocken*) is the title of another work made in 1920. Photos of textiles, cut out and partially overpainted, form the components of a fossil machine deposited underground (plate 2). In the title, which echoes the *Ave Maria*, the Hostess on the Lahn—a key figure from the bawdy verse commonly recited in student fraternal organizations³⁹—appears as Germany's protector and playmate ("grant us thy jubilation"). The pillars of German nationalism (industry and economy) are resting on the dirty ground of scatophilia. This admixture of the official and the hidden corresponds, in the picture, to an inextricable confusion of outer and inner. It shows cuts through various interiors—of the earth (strata), of a machine (gear wheels), of a body (blood vessels, flesh-colored masses), and of a tree (wood grain with embedded pink vermin)—and at the same time is studded with motifs that indicate an outer covering: skin, hair, walls, yarn, fringe, seams, scars. Here and there, formal connections ensue between the two groups of motifs: veins merge into strands of yarn, and strands of yarn into machine parts, seams, and scars.

The de-differentiation between outer and inner is continued in Ernst's use of collage and overpainting. To summarize a few observations from chapter 1: While collage, as an operation of the cutting apart of surfaces, can be considered analogous to a surgical intervention or a geological excavation, overpainting

can be understood as a procedure for the creation of new surfaces. However, as opposed to the surgeon or the geologist, the collagist who leaves his traces in Ernst's pictures does not expose any structures but loses himself in a labyrinthine interior, where he makes incisions that cannot be unequivocally located. For example, one observes the black rim below the yarn machine, which, on the left, fits snugly within the horizontal strata and, on the right, overlaps them. The layering proceeds both from the lower to the upper edge of the picture, and from pictorial support to picture surface, without these two orders being somehow mediated. Just as the collage does not reveal any inner structures, the new surface created by the overpainting cannot be conceived as a living skin. At best it is a work of provisional repair (wall parts, textiles, seams, scars), or—one observes the viscous pink mass around the machine parts—a rejected substance that refers to the scatophilic figure of the Hostess on the Lahn.

“Scatophilia” is the key word that, in this instance, performs the task of psychoanalytically orienting the reference to the world war (science, industry, nationalism). German productivity is dissected by an infantile sexual researcher like the one Freud describes in his work published immediately before the war's outbreak, and it is analyzed along the lines of cloacal theory. “Cloacal theory” is Freud's term for the early childhood fantasy of birth as excretion. Its result is the dismantling of the mother into an anal machine, in which the mechanical elements have the function of bodily organs.⁴⁰ Likewise, Ernst's artistic interventions lead to the mechanization and mortification of the maternal object, represented through the collaged and overpainted photos of close-up/tactile pieces of knitting.

While the seduction and castration threat of *The Chinese Nightingale* attests to the plasticity of the pleasure principle—which makes even a bomb into a desirable body—in *Madam Hostess on the Lahn*, this metamorphic power is brutally arrested. If one chooses to follow the psychoanalytic interpretive option as far as it can go, one arrives at the concept of the death drive. As is well known, Freud was the only psychoanalyst who drew from the war trauma a conclusion as radical as it was speculative, when, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he introduced the death drive as an antagonistic factor underlying the libido. The compulsive, unprocessed return of traumatic events in the dreams and symptoms of those who have lived through them is an expression of this conservative force, which strives for nothing other than the return of the organism to inorganicity.

Artists' use of psychoanalysis is often chastised for being naive. But suspecting the work, in its motifs of rigidification, of a death drive that the surrealists supposedly "repressed," as Foster does in his main thesis in *Compulsive Beauty*,⁴¹ shows a no less naively positivist approach to psychoanalysis. On Freud's theory of the death drive, Foucault remarked, "Freud wished to explain war; but it was war that was dreamed in this shift in Freud's thinking."⁴² More prosaically stated, the parallel interest in de-organizing that connects Ernst's pictures and Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* should not be placed under the interpretive authority of psychoanalysis. It appears in the context, in the 1920s, of a widely observed metaphors of mortification,⁴³ which refers to the mineral aesthetic of prewar modernism and its distortion through the experience of world war. I will return at greater length to the example of the expressionist poetics of crystal and its debasement in Ernst's Dada pictures. But first, I would like to make a few more observations on the comparison of *The Chinese Nightingale* and *Madam Hostess on the Lahn*.

In the preceding chapter, I tried to show that, inasmuch as Ernst's Dada overpaintings imply a psychoanalytic metaphors of production (in which the procedure of overpainting is analogous to repression), this metaphors breaks down as a result of the logic of disfiguring repetition. These pictures are not psychoanalytic display cases: they do not showcase models that represent the functioning of the unconscious or the psychic apparatus; nor in any way do they present an iconography that can be deciphered as a coherent text. Using the example of *Madam Hostess on the Lahn*, I would like to describe again the negativity that characterizes the processing of psychoanalytic discourse. The picture itself directs the viewer to attempt to decipher its motifs according to the paradigm of outer/inner, in which all the pictorial elements participate. That their differentiation is disrupted in the picture—and thus it remains uncertain which layer is on the top, what is skin and what is flesh, which are hairs and which are veins—repeatedly calls into question the possibility that the picture can be deciphered. Instead, the picture remains a construction that arranges numerous references to the theory of infantile sexual research: first the scatophilic hostess of the inscription, then the pieces of knitting (mother metonymies), organ fragments (the search for the origin of life), and machine parts (mechanization of the maternal body).

The photo collages are an entirely different matter. They anticipate the frottages in that their capacity to be related to the theorem of the phallic, castrating

woman is not only the result of individual motifs such as the cutout eye but, moreover, is visually substantiated through corresponding spatial effects—through a convulsive spatiality that simultaneously seduces and threatens the viewer. The photo collage is a picture that produces a space of hysterical seduction art under whose spell the interpretation of the picture also falls. By contrast, the overpainting is a picture that makes the act of interpretation conspicuous as always being an act of selection and recombination of different and incompatible alternatives.

This difference between the pictorial forms shows itself in the ways that the two works can be written about: *The Chinese Nightingale* can be described in categories (seduction, dance, convulsive space, threat) denoting presence to the viewer. By contrast, *Madam Hostess on the Lahn* only allows semantic analysis according to the paradigmatic opposition outer/inner, and it resists any attempt to be viewed integratively. While the photo collage draws the beholder into a dynamic spatial continuum, in the overpainting her or his attention is blocked by a much worked-over, stratified, soiled, scarred picture surface; while the photo collage seduces, the overpainting, with its many barriers—layers, walls, clothing, boards, rejected substances—denies the possibility of immersion or even of any type of affective relation to the picture. It seems as though the foreign body (the eye or the laurel)—which, in the (proto-)surrealist picture, thrusts itself to the picture surface—has now itself become identical with the rigidified surface of the Dadaist picture. *Madam Hostess on the Lahn* not only contains several variations of the foreign body motif (embedded machine parts, overpainted photos, parts of walls and textiles that have been applied and covered over, insects hidden in wood); the picture as a whole becomes a foreign body, an inextricable confusion of outside and inside with a mortified surface that repels any attempt at visual synthesis.

The fundamental difference between Ernst's surrealist and Dadaist pictures is that the former use foreign bodies as catalysts for a viewing process, while the latter themselves comprise foreign bodies of viewing. In the surrealist works, foreign bodies mark local disruptions that refer to the moment of threat in the erotic mystery, without threatening this mystery; in the Dadaist pictures, foreign bodies are the end result of mutually paralyzing procedures at work in the picture: procedures such as overpainting and collage, layering and dismantling. These form a surface covered with cuts, wounds, scars, and stains—a surface that destroys the very homogeneity and closure that will be the condition of sur-

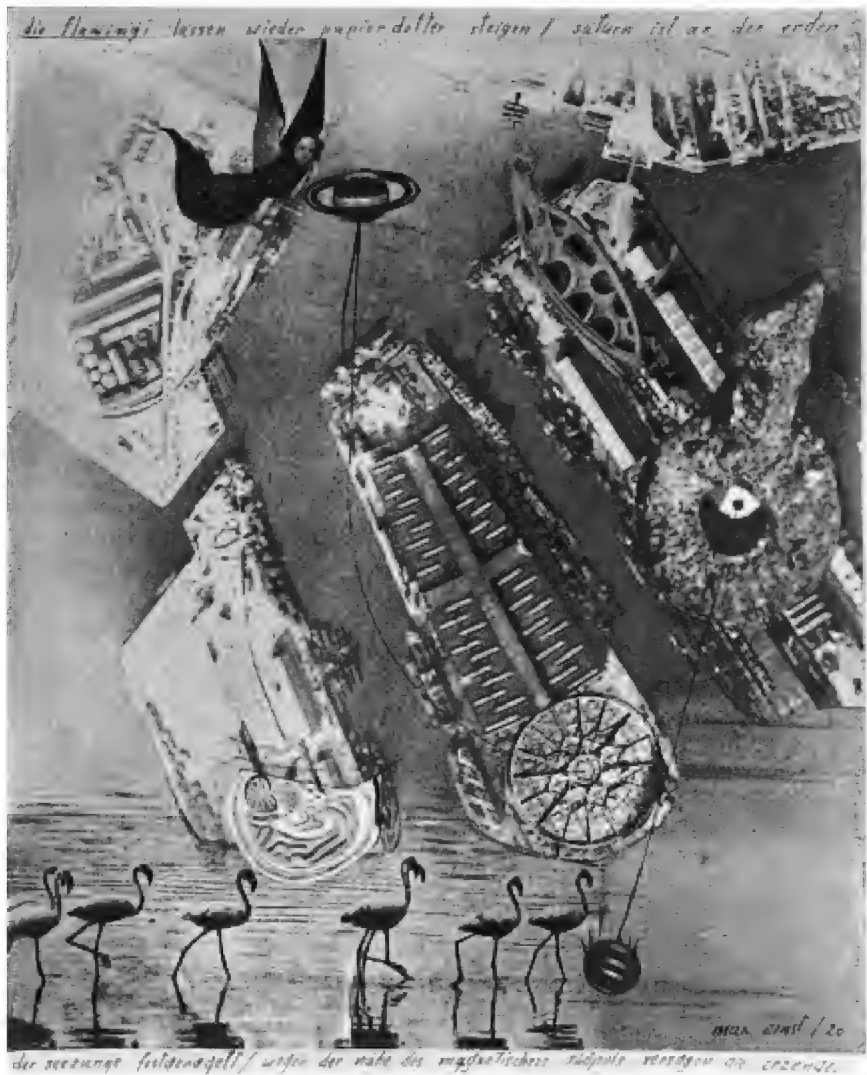
realist pictorial effects and mysteries. Ernst's stratified Dada overpaintings are the foreign bodies of visibility, which the (proto-)surrealist pictures strive to integrate into a world of erotic mystery.

CRYSTALLIZATION

The polarity that presents itself between *The Chinese Nightingale* and *Madam Hostess on the Lahn* seems generally to constitute the relationship between the photo collages and the geological overpaintings. Since the overpaintings have already been analyzed at length, let us observe a second photo collage more closely. In *The Flamingos* (*die flamingi lassen wieder papierdotter steigen*; fig. 49), the harbor moles of Dunkirk⁴⁴ dangle like "Dover sole"⁴⁵ in the same water in which the flamingos are wading. The long-range clarity of the aerial view, which records the harbor with cartographic/diagrammatic precision,⁴⁶ suddenly reverses into a tactile close-up, confirmed by the dissected brain and especially by the unidentifiable rock formation to the right, above. This oscillation between near and far is continued in the two ropes, from which one heavenly body swings like a pendulum and the other soars like a kite. Besides flamingos, angels are the only species that can survive in this dizzying pictorial space that veers between tangibility and optical distance. In more formalistic terms, rotational operations in the homogenous pictorial field of a photographed photo collage create a seductively pulsating space that achieves positive illusion effects, as opposed to the reified illusionism of the overpaintings.

A significant portion of Ernst's Dadaist works can be organized along the poles of positive photo collages and negative overpaintings. In the photo collages, there is seductive rotation, concealment of the cut, transparency of the surface, and convulsive continuity of the space. In the overpaintings, there is obstructive layering, demonstration of the cut, opacity of the surface, and rigidification of the space. In terms of content, these contrary qualities correspond to the photo collages' motifs of flight—aircraft bombs, birds, airplanes, angels, flying fish, and dogs—and the overpaintings' subterranean iconography.⁴⁷ The distance that separates the two pictorial worlds from each other is traversed by projections: unintegrable, opaque details from the world of overpainting are projected into the world of photo collage (for instance, there is the curious petrifaction in the upper right of *The Flamingos*, fig. 49), and, conversely, the convulsive

FIGURE 49
 Max Ernst, *The Flamingos (die flamingi)*, 1920.
 29.3 × 23 cm,
 photographic enlargement
 and photo-
 montage,
 mounted on
 board with
 ink. Private
 collection (S/M
 no. 393). ©
 2012 Artists
 Rights Society
 (ARS), New
 York / ADAGP,
 Paris.



space of the mutable photo collages is projected into the rigidified overpaintings (for instance, there is the pulsating, intertwining relief space of the plants in *Sodalites*, fig. 10).

Heaven and earth, open space and labyrinth, fulfilled seeing and obstructed seeing: the experience of the front was also split along these poles, as Eric J. Leed has demonstrated in *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*. While trench warfare was described as a destructive paralysis (contaminating, visually disempowering, and collectively proletarianizing), the image of the airman embodied lost illusions of personal valor, with all its implied qualities of visibility and the sovereign view, mobility and unprecedented freedom. The sky—which was the “cavemen’s” only view amidst a decimated, often invisible landscape—revealed in the form of the heroic flyer the trench fighter’s disappointed higher self. In the summer of 1914, this higher self had cheered the mobilization, in expectation that the Great War would bring the testing and confirmation, even the creation of its true identity. From the muddy maze of trenches, airplanes in the sky offered themselves as viewpoints for self-distancing and the division of consciousness. At last, from their heights, there was an unimpeded view and the hero’s chance to be seen. From their heights, too, perhaps the labyrinth of trenches would appear logical and justified.⁴⁸ This division of the experience of war between opaque earth and redeeming sky also structures statements made by several modernist artists who celebrated the industrialized war as the revelation of the hidden reality that their pictures had already been aiming for in the prewar years. Franz Marc, friend and role model to the young Ernst,⁴⁹ describes an experience of war as could only present itself to a modernist painter influenced by Wassily Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and Wilhelm Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*:

We are waiting at the edge of a wood with our munitions wagons; the thunder of the cannons rolls like a furious storm along the whole horizon. All around are little clouds of smoke. Both thunder and clouds are already part of the landscape, like the echo that propels and doubles every shot. Suddenly, a curious whirring that passes above and away from us in an enormous arc, irregular, in constant oscillations, verging from a shrill whistle to a low rumble, like the high, wide cry of a bird of prey, always repeated, with the obstinacy of an animal that knows no other call. Then in the distance the muffled bang.

These are the enemy's heavy artillery shots, which race overhead to a target unknown to us. One shot follows another; the sky is the purest autumn blue and yet we feel the high channels in which the shots storm through it. Even for the artillerists, artillery battle often has some mystical, mythic quality.⁵⁰

Marc conjures the landscape of war as an opaque space of gun smoke and artillery fire—echo, whirring, shrill whistle, low rumble, the “high, wide cry of a bird of prey,” and a “muffled bang.” Suddenly, the view that the phenomenal world dissimulates breaks through this wall of noise and opens itself to plain sight. Then projectiles become winged creatures and fill the space with vibrations and trails that crystallize into “channels.” A crystallized space takes form, as in the paintings of the expressionists and cubo-futurists—as in Marc's animal fights or the variations of them that Ernst painted in 1917.⁵¹

The crystallization of image, experience, and ego in artillery fire fulfills the desire, which already motivated Marc's prewar art, to escape the contingency of the historical and enter an eternal, transparent order. Only the one who annihilates history can hope for crystalline purity:

The world is full to suffocation. Man has placed a lien of his own cleverness on every stone. Every word is rented and mortgaged. What can be done for blessedness but give it all up and flee? But draw a line between yesterday and today?

This deed is the great task of our time, the one task for which it is worth living and dying. . . .

So let us go forth into new regions and experience the great shock that all is yet untrodden, unspoken, untilled and unexplored. The world lies before us in purity, our footsteps tremble. If we dare to go, the umbilical cord must be cut that binds us with the maternal past.⁵²

The prewar dawn that is the end of history, the venturing forth into new, untrodden regions that also severs the tie to a past perceived as impure and maternal, after 1914 becomes a quick trot in the pure morning air:

I rode through a town with lovely old buildings; the women looked out the windows. The hour was russet-hued, bright and homely (*heimlich*). Then I was struck by these thoughts of the danger of dead, still deadly things, and of the great purity.

Might the good old devout ones have guessed what was in my mind? Something true and close, the “danger,” they certainly sensed.

But I trotted quickly out of the town of many memories and contagions, until I smelled the pure air of dawn.⁵³

As he rides through the village, the association of Marc’s thoughts as they proceed from “homely” to “deadly” can be traced to the same literary topos that Freud will analyze only a few years later, also as a reaction to the war. The *heimlich* (homely) in the sense of familiar, original, maternal, in becoming the *heimlich* (hidden) in the sense of forbidden and repressed, proves to be the *unheimlich* (uncanny): the menacing return of a past distorted through repression. Marc has fallen prey to the *heimlich/unheimlich*, which Freud will attempt to conceive as a problem of psychoanalytic theory. Before 1914, that from which he intended to free himself with a cut to the umbilical cord returns, “russet-hued, bright and homely,” as the danger of contaminating the purity of the ahistorical. The well-known thesis presented (independently) by Klaus Theweleit and Sandra Gilbert is proven once again: that the misogynistic fantasies of the prewar era escalated during the war.⁵⁴

While Ernst’s photo collages parody the war ideology of the untrammelled, mythic, crystalline heavens, his overpaintings derive their grotesque wit from the experiences of trench warfare. As the free-roaming imagination of the soldiers on the front is expressed in the mystery of the photo collages, their physical immobility and disempowerment is expressed in the foreign bodies of the overpaintings. In terms of motif, connections between expressionist war fantasies and Ernst’s Dadaist pictures are only too clear and can be exhaustively demonstrated.⁵⁵ Ernst’s own fascination for the crystalline as a motif of redemption in the world of trench warfare can be cited as a biographical motivation. Certainly, he was familiar with Worringer’s highly influential book *Abstraction and Empathy*, through which the metaphors of crystal gained new currency among artists.⁵⁶ An art-critical text published during the war shows how fervently Ernst confessed to a central “expressionist” persuasion. As previously formulated by Worringer (who was not the only one to have written on the subject but who had the greatest impact), the age of the “subjective/discretionary and only individually conditioned” was being followed by a new, at once primitive and nomothetic art.⁵⁷ In

his essay “Vergleichung” (“Comparison”) published in 1917 in the *Kölner Tagblatt*,⁵⁸ Ernst repeated the widely held construction of history according to which the development from impressionism to the present was understood as a movement from sensuality to will. Expressionism, cubism, and futurism—the recent manifestations of the “masculine spirit” and “pure world formation”⁵⁹—emerge as the great vanquishers of hedonistic impressionism, envisioned as “spread wide to conceive at any moment.”⁶⁰ “With the advent of cubism, the world is more beautiful, more willed: the spirit of our will.”⁶¹

The essay is signed “Max Ernst (currently in the field).”⁶² After three years in the artillery, he certainly had no illusions about the reality of the war. His correspondence from this time bespeaks a tired irony. However, as a modern artist, he was swept away by the pathos that would prove the days and years in the field-gray uniform had served the testing and refinement of the determining, crystalline spirit. These patterns of self-perception took on the task of exalting the figure of the modern artist even under the conditions of industrialized warfare. Since the Dadaist war pictures parody the crystalline freedom of the heavens and the maternal uncanniness of the earth, they could be interpreted from a biographical perspective as instruments with which Ernst dissected and amputated his own war expressionism. Meanwhile, the obvious but until now undervalued fact that they are small, partly dilettantish, partly virtuosic pictures with lengthy inscriptions points to a media-historical context.

POSTCARDS FROM THE FIELD

Like machine guns, heavy artillery, and poison gas, the large-scale implementation of military postcards constituted the modernity of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1918 in the German Reich alone, more than five billion were sent, postage free, as the most important communicative means for reassuring people at home.⁶³ For artists who had been drawn into a war that promised new unity, not least the unity of modern art and general consciousness, what could be more alluring than the attempt to mix their own pictures with millions of picture postcards? In fact, several artists who served on the front were interested in this medium, which, like no other, is located at the intersection of the individual and modern history. Even if the textual field is left completely blank, the postmark proves with the assurance of an indexical sign and the authority of a state institu-

tion that the sender was an eyewitness. Nevertheless, and especially for modern artists, it can mean many different things to be an eyewitness and thus to take part in a historical event.

Forty-six postcards have been preserved from Otto Dix, all addressed to Helene Jakob. This is a small part of the body of work that Dix made as a soldier, including more than five hundred drawings; but in terms of the artist's objectives, it is highly significant. For the most part illustrated with his own drawings, the postcards serve to show his girlfriend in Dresden what Dix had seen with his own eyes: the company bathing, a communications trench at Angres, a machine-gun stand, a Russian, ruins, the troops' quarters in an attic, and the wreckage of Aubérive, which Dix also describes in an ekphrasis of his drawing:

Shell holes in villages are full of elementary force. Everything around them seems subject to the dynamic of these violent, symmetrical craters. They are the eye sockets of the earth, and circling around them are their painfully fantastical lines. Those aren't houses anymore, no one seriously believes that. They are living creatures, a particular species with its own laws and living conditions. They are sheer holes with stones around them, or sheer skeletons. It is a strange, rare beauty that speaks here.⁶⁴

Dix's postcards from the field, his drawings and commentaries, are testaments in the emphatic sense, saying, "I was there, I lived through the war, I experienced its unknown beauty." About his monumental painting *Der Schützengraben* (*The Trench*) (1920/23), he would say: "This is how it was, I saw it." The artists of the *Jungen Rheinland* (Young Rhineland), who defended him against the criticism of Julius Meier-Graefe, likewise swore to the authenticity of Dix's experience of the war: "Dix lived through it—just as Meier-Graefe demanded of artists in 1914."⁶⁵ In fact, no matter whether Dix, in the enthusiasm of 1914, paints his own portrait as a bull-necked soldier and draws shell holes in the shape of flowers or, after 1918, is received as an anti-militaristic painter,⁶⁶ his art remains constantly committed to the ideal of "experiencing the war." The artist is not only an eyewitness; as a witness, he is above all a herald of "that strange, rare beauty that speaks here"—here, in the rubble of bombed-out villages. In that Dix uses postcards as the medium of an emphatic testimony, which is certified not by the postmark so much as by the artist's capacity for experience, his art participates in the general cult of testimony that developed around military mail. As Bernd

Ulrich has shown, before the beginning of the war, the reliability of eyewitness reports was rigorously tested and relativized by empirical psychology, but later the value of military mail as a testament to the war was judged according to entirely different criteria. The witnesses' inner involvement qualified them as heralds.⁶⁷ In the prewar years, modern art, too, problematized the reality reference of its pictures. Only later did the world war create a reality that seemed to produce the referentiality of cubo-futurist paintings. Franz Marc describes artillery battle as a crystallization, similar to that which characterizes his own paintings. Otto Dix discovered the realism of fragmented pictorial spaces in the shell holes of the western front.

Berlin Dada took the ideal of art as "war experience" and radicalized it until war experience disintegrated into disconnected moments. Shell shock was reproduced through the pictorial shock of photomontage, the literal continuation of the chain of violence into the revolutionary postwar period.⁶⁸ If one can believe Georges Grosz, it began with military postcards:

In 1916, when Johnny Heartfield and I invented photomontage in my studio at the south end of town at five o'clock one May morning, we had no idea of the immense possibilities, or of the thorny but successful career that awaited the new invention.

On a piece of cardboard we pasted a *mischmasch* of advertisements for hernia belts, student song books and dog food, labels from schnapps and wine bottles, and photographs from picture papers, cut up at will in such a way as to say, in pictures, what would have been banned by the censors if we had said it in words. In this way we made postcards supposed to have been sent from the Front, or from home to the Front. This led some of our friends, Tretjakoff among them, to create the legend that photomontage was an invention of the "anonymous masses." What did happen was that Heartfield was moved to develop what started as an inflammatory political joke into a conscious artistic technique.⁶⁹

Whether or not this report is historically accurate, it contains an implicit poetics of photomontage in Berlin Dadaism. Grosz and Heartfield recognized the military postcard as a strategic pictorial form—a propaganda weapon. Smuggled into normal military mail, the first Dadaist photomontages were image grenades, which, through blasted and illegible fragments, continued the war by

reproducing the madness of the war through images of madness. Berlin Dada's military postcards are not testaments to an artistic view that heralds the secret beauty of barrage and shell holes. Instead, like munitions that the soldiers' councils diverted from the barracks, they are intended to function as weapons in a war that, for many, had not yet ended in November 1918.

The surviving mail that Ernst sent to his family from the field shows an entirely different person from the one who succumbs to the pathos of the crystal ideology in his art-theoretical writings of the war years. It shows the Ernst who would ask resignedly in his autobiography, "What can he do against military life—its stupidity, its ugliness, its cruelty? Screaming, swearing, vomiting with rage doesn't accomplish anything."⁷⁰

The scream of Berlin Dada was not how Ernst reacted to World War I, either in his pictures or in the four years he served—during which time, unlike Grosz or Heartfield, he did not attract attention as an anti-militarist or a psychiatric case. The following postcard has been preserved from the end of 1915 (fig. 50):

This beautiful winter landscape is the farm of Mont du Crocq. Between the narrow gable to the left and the stubby tower in the middle, you see a slanting roof. Under there I wage war. The house halfway up the hill is the wireless station. To the left, the romantic grotto is the entrance to a deep underground labyrinth, the cave of our gallantry, in case of a bombardment. There no one can find us. Greetings, kisses, your Max⁷¹

This card is evidently neither a weapon nor an emphatic testimony. Like most of the postcards that were sent, it serves a very obvious, familiar purpose, as an index that advertises the location and the health of a son and brother. The picture postcard performs this function so well because it relieves the sender of the impossible task of finding appropriate words for the reality of war, the cruelty of destruction, and the danger to himself. The side with the picture is a communication readymade. Merely by selecting it, the sender acquires an easily articulable topic that clears some distance from his own experience. When used within a family, as in Ernst's example, the postcard is a trace of survival that emerges from the events of war. The deciphering of this trace serves to distract from the war and dissimulate its indescribability with borrowed, prefabricated pictures.⁷²

Ernst's commentary redoubles this logic of distraction and dissimulation by

FIGURE 50
Military
postcard from
Max Ernst
to his family.
Mont du
Crocq Farm,
end of 1915.



sketching an idyll and undermining it through its sudden unmasking: “. . . a slanting roof. Under there I wage war.” One observes the ironic naïveté learned from literary fairy tales of the romantic period, and the romantic sites of the wartime landscape: grotto, underground labyrinth, the cave of gallantry, Mother Earth, who promises to offer warmth and safety to the fighters. The earth’s interior, which in 1917 was absorbed into the crystal mythos by painters and theorists, appears here in a metaphors of the maternal that is approached with laconic irony. In the Dada pictures, this metaphors will be dissected by an infantile sexual researcher.

No less noteworthy are the formal correlations between wartime postcards and the Dada pictures: they are connected by the small format, the use of ready-made images, as well as the irony and dissimulation characteristic of the appended commentary. Ernst borrowed the language of the fairy tale in 1915; in 1920 it was the language of the student lodging house (*Madam Hostess on the Lahn*) and, again, that of the fairy tale (*The Chinese Nightingale*). In fact, Ernst had two of his photo collages made into editions of postcards.⁷³

The medium of the military postcard clearly shows how artists situated their works in modern history: Dix drew emphatic testaments in order to reproduce

the totality of the concept of history⁷⁴ through the synthetic capacity of the subject. Grosz and Heartfield assembled weapons and referred metonymically to the totality of the historical situation in which they were working (though this totality was lacerated and characterized by shocks). By contrast, Ernst leaves traces of survival, the deciphering of which distracts from the witnessed event. But how can the metonymic referential function of the trace simultaneously distract from that to which it testifies? The overpaintings and the photo collages correspond to two stages in this process of detachment. First, the trace hardens into a strange and illegible image; second, this image provokes an imaginative seeing of resemblances and makes the trace available as an element of metaphoric developments. The overpaintings show the trace in its hardening, and the photo collages show it in its reworking and absorption through metaphor (as an occasion to escape, by means of the modern war machine, into a world of Oedipal compromise formations). In a divided and thus complementary distortion, on the one hand, war testimony is mortified into a foreign body with its confusion of outside and inside, and on the other hand, the foreign body is integrated into a pictorial form of the sexual secret.

EXCURSUS

THE EARTH: A FORMAL HISTORY OF A THEME

The polarity between mortification into a foreign body and transformation of the foreign body into an Oedipal secret, between rigidification and motility, would seem to indicate that the surrealist frottages have little to do with the theme of the earth. Nevertheless, the history of the earth is the subject of Max Ernst's first surrealist series. In recounting this history, the series makes use of a pictorial form that is associated not with the geological foreign body pictures such as *Madam Hostess on the Lahn*, but rather with the photo collages. In these and the frottages, heterogeneous textures are joined in a seamless surface that opens a pulsating space. The reproduction of the frottages through heliogravure makes this connection evident, since the material accumulations of rubbing vanish behind an optical film, as do the various cuts in the photographically reproduced photo collages.¹ Thus, as a surrealist, Ernst tells about the earth; however, the pictorial form of his terrestrial recounting is fundamentally different from that of the geologic landscapes of the Dada years. The question is then raised as to why the theme of the earth was able to assert its primacy even after the pictorial form and process had changed. This question can only be asked if themes neither are considered as readily available to the artist's discretion, as may seem the case from a strict formalist perspective, nor are hypostasized into the origin of artwork.² In the following, the theme of the earth will be analyzed in its variable relationship to the structural characteristics and problems of Ernst's poetics, and the various psychoanalytic interpretations of this theme will likewise be examined from this perspective.

In the works produced between Dada and surrealism, between the scarred surface of the wartime landscapes and the simulacra of *Natural History*, the theme of the earth takes on a new meaning. Bodily fragments continue to be stored in the earth's interior (fig. 51), but now they are provided with an elaborated iconography of psychoanalytic, hermetic, and alchemical motifs,³ in order to refer the dismembered body parts to a sublimating and unifying process that designates the earth as the site of surreal image production. This drama of transformation whereby the earth, a milieu of dismemberment in the Dadaist overpaintings,



FIGURE 51
Max Ernst,
*Men Shall
Know Nothing
of This* (*Les
hommes n'en
sauront rien*),
1920. 80.5
× 54 cm, oil
on canvas,
Tate Gallery,
London
(S/M no.
653). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

becomes a milieu of synthesis is presented in *Woman, Old Man, and Flower* (weib, greis u. blume) from 1924 (plate 3). There are two protagonists: at the left, there is the old man with a woman on a stratified strip of landscape, and in the center, in front of the landscape stage set, there is the flower, a chimera assembled out of firm buttocks, a perforated breastplate, and an enormous fan for a head. Most interpreters take the figures as antagonistic: they consider the old man as a paternal laughingstock and the chimera as the blue flower of surrealism. Alternately, the old man is interpreted as a visionary and the blue flower as his internal image.⁴ But this alternative is too simplistic.⁵ The old man can indeed be described as an unequivocal representative of Oedipal power. His wolf face refers to traditional father fantasies made current in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and the Wolf Man study;⁶ what's more, he possesses the woman, and this possession corresponds to traditional illusionistic painting à la Velázquez. But the amputation of his feet makes him into the riddle-solving Oedipus, and his cape is the clothing of a figure from one of the adventure stories the surrealists cherished as the treasure of their adolescence. Finally, his curious behavior is surrealist: he gazes with closed eyes into the earth's interior. In fact, he is an ambiguous figure who brings together characteristics of the despised paternal world with attributes and activities of surrealism. In its ambivalence, this figure is analogous to the grotesque father figure from Ernst's "Visions of Half-Sleep," who terrifies the young Max, is presented by the adult Max to the reader's derision, and who simultaneously performs a surrealist activity, conjuring all manner of beasts from pre-morphic textures. Both the old man in the picture and Ernst's father in the surrealist text are allegories of the surrealist productivity of an Oedipal figure.

The analogy to the "Visions of Half-Sleep" can be pursued further: just as in the "Visions," in this painting, too, the Oedipal figure is subordinated to the more powerful figure of the phallic woman, who appears in the last vision as the guarantor of a fulfilled, flawless visuality, and who also commands the scene in *Woman, Old Man, and Flower*. While the old man hunches over the eyepiece in an unnatural torsion and thus threatens to fall to the left, out of the picture, the flower stands upright and imitates with its arms the majestic rotational movement that the fan has already carried out. In doing so, its silhouette seems to emerge from the stony strip of foreground and to vault the entire space of the landscape, from the sea to the distant shore. The blue skin and the transparency of its upper body support this all-encompassing gesture, which breaks the spell

of stone. But where does the blue flower of surrealism thrive? Along its right thigh, the rocks give way—but this may only be a scenographic trick. Probably the flower is standing in front of the picture, in its own space, which the strangely bare potted plant, to the left, and the brass knob that is likely part of a bedstead, to the right, allow to be identified as an interior. This interior space, difficult to locate, seems to extend in the thin layer of the aesthetic boundary between the picture and the space of the viewer. The individual elements of the flower figure, especially the fan and the buttocks, occupy an indeterminate between-zone. The glints of light on each buttock do their part to lend these body parts an uncomfortable nearness—as if, each time they are perceived, they emerge from the picture on their own strength and materialize exactly on the medial boundary. Here, the simulacral power that brings the represented object to life, “though without entirely divesting its unreal character,”⁷ is expressed satirically and is kept at a distance through satirical apotropaia. The green ribbon tied around the hips and the four yellow and blue buttons affixed to the face mask and corselet function as magic charms. The buttons send out impenetrably reflective gazes that at once fascinate and keep the viewer at a distance.

Impenetrable gazes, fans, dancing arms, armor, circling movements: these elements identify the painting as a reworking of *The Chinese Nightingale* (fig. 48). It is particularly striking that Ernst approximates this photo collage in the oil painting without aiming for the former’s most important effect, the creation of a pulsating space that absorbs incisions and foreign bodies. Only through the contrasting insertion of details (such as the buttocks and the fan) into the rigid stage set space does the oil painting give rise to a simulacral effect that vitalizes the medial boundary while maintaining an unreal quality. Not until the frottages will pictures be made again that are simulacra in their entirety, and in this way pick up where photo collages such as *The Chinese Nightingale* left off. *Woman, Old Man, and Flower* marks a decisive transition, since, on the one hand, it seeks an engagement with simulacral pictures such as *The Chinese Nightingale* and moreover presents an iconographic staging that anticipates the “Visions of Half-Sleep,” while, on the other hand, despite these motifs that clearly point ahead to the frottages to be made in the following year, the painting does not create a pulsating pictorial space that absorbs cuts and fragments, as the photo collages did, and as the frottages will go on to do.

If one attends exclusively to artistic procedures, the still life of pears from 1925

(fig. 19) is the work in which the transition from fossil illusionism to ghostly mimesis is put forward explicitly: frottage is compared with cut and diagram in order to profile frottage as a pictorial form that provokes an imaginative seeing of resemblances, which brings the picture surface to life as a pulsating space. By contrast, *Woman, Old Man, and Flower*, made one year before the still life of pears, is the work that demonstrates the iconographic passage from Dada to surrealism with particular clarity. This work shows the transformation to which the tellurian iconography had to be subject before the geological theme of the Dadaist overpaintings and diagrams could become the theme of the surrealist *Natural History*. The earth had to be transformed from a milieu of fragmentation into one that synthesizes the disparate individual parts into a figure (the figure of the phallic woman). Moreover, this iconographic stabilization is also accompanied by intimations of a formal stabilization. The most important of these is that the phallic woman is given her own platform offstage, beyond the boundaries of the picture, upon which platform she can be located as a physical figure.

In order to understand how these iconographic and formal transformations are connected to one another and related to the theme of the earth, it is first necessary to recall the function this theme had in the Dadaist pictures. In the diagrams, made in dialogue with Picabia and Duchamp (figs. 6, 7, 8), various motifs of petrification or erosion occupied the outside edges of pictorial subjects and supports. These motifs functioned as thematic surrogates of the heaviness and materiality that the diagram, with its destruction of the illusionistic picture, had also negated. In the geological overpaintings of 1920/21 (plate 1, figs. 10, 12, 15, 52), Max Ernst again employed individual elements of the illusionistic picture (rectangular format, perspectival grid, plasticity, platform), in a secondary usage that preserved a negated mode of representation as negated. In sum, the geological iconography became the distorted surrogate of that which the blunted and emaciated world of these pictures no longer offered: namely, heavy, material objects that can be located in space. In the critical lower third of the picture, where, in illusionism, the platform would perform its function, some works display excessive surrogate creations, replete with the psychoanalytic iconography of the infantile “cloacal theory,” which itself has to do with a surrogate creation: in researching the question of the origin of life (and of other children), the child is directed to mechanical surrogate parts, from which it imaginatively fabricates the maternal body as an anal machine.⁸ In *eislandschaften*, *eiszapfen* und

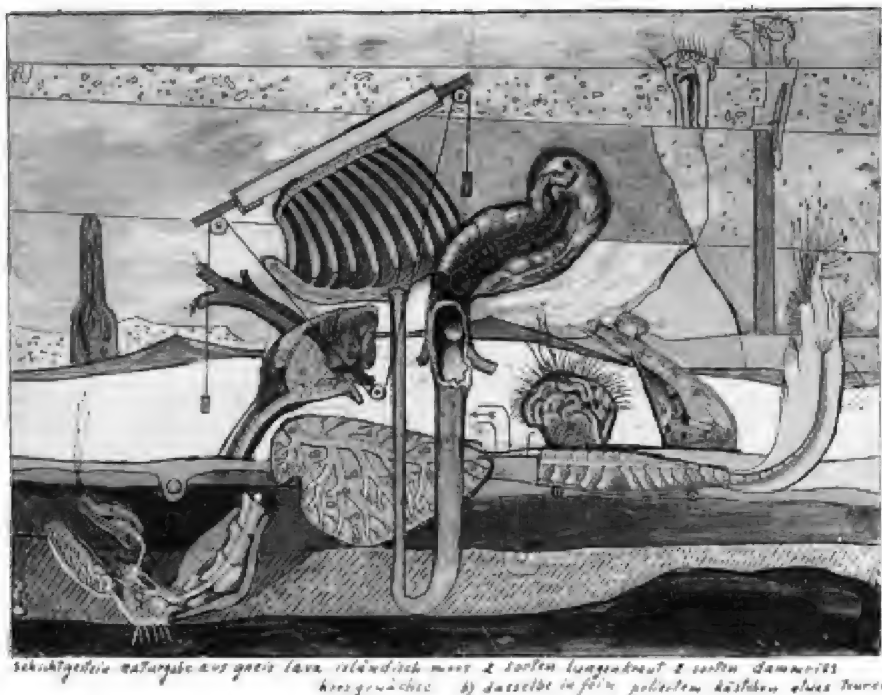
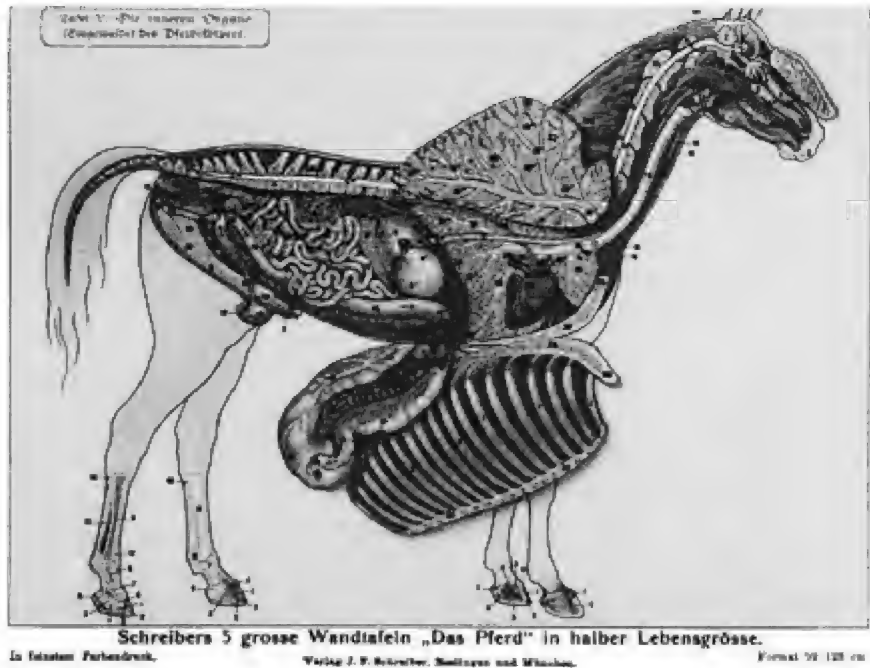


FIGURE 52
Max Ernst,
*Stratified
Rocks,
Nature's Gift
of Gneiss Lava
Iceland Moss*
(*schichtgestein
naturgabe aus
gneiss*), 1920.
15,2 × 20.6
cm, gouache
and pencil
(overpainting
on a print),
New York,
Museum of
Modern Art
(S/M no.
367). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

gesteinsarten des weiblichen körpers (Frozen Landscapes, Icicles and Mineral Types of the Female Body) (plate 1), the mechanical dismantling of the feminine/tellurian underground could possibly allude to this context. In several other works, softening and liquefaction of the bottom zone of the picture can be observed: the destroyed body in *Madam Hostess on the Lahn* (*frau wirtin an der lahn*) (plate 2), the mucilage in *Katharina undulata* (fig. 16, also titled *frau wirtin a. d. lahn*), the subterranean fluids in *winterlandschaft: vergasung der vulkanisierten eisenbraut zur erzeugung der nötigen bettwärme* (Winter Landscape: Vaporization of the Vulcanized Iron Bride to Produce the Necessary Bed Warmth; fig. 15), or the lowermost stratum of *schichtgestein* (Stratified Rocks; figs. 52, 53). In this work, it is notable that none of the bones of the main motif, a fossil horse, have been preserved. The coating of the lowermost rock layer in a fluid brown color explains why the soft parts, specifically, have been retained. The geological diagram illustrates the law of metonymic displacement, which leads from product to the apparatus of production: if the earth's interior is a cloaca, then digestive organs are most well preserved. In addition, the picture's

FIGURE 53
From *Cologne
Catalogue
of Teaching
Aids (Katalog
der Kölner
Lehrmittelan-
stalt)*, 1914,
pp. 1056ff.



inscription⁹ identifies “two kinds of ruptures of the perineum,” and thus makes reference to the mythologem of the infantile sexual researcher who imagines the origin of life in the anus. In a central position, the intestine opens, waves like a windsock over the landscape, and leads through a pipe into the earth’s interior. The deadened landscape of rigidified illusionism thus sustains a few distinct sensations, as strong as they are repulsive. This decline of the geological into a scatophilic iconography is an excess of content that, however, appears in a precisely determined place. That is, the place where the secondary use of illusionistic set pieces is particularly precarious: in the vicinity of the picture’s lower edge, where a platform should extend into a receding space in order to receive objects with a specific heaviness and materiality. The designation of the earth as a cloaca which is the grotesque surrogate of the maternal body has thus to be understood as an iconographic symptom of the condition that a critical zone extends in the vicinity of the picture’s lower edge after illusionism has broken down or has been preserved only as a surrogate.¹⁰

The earth is redeemed from the cloacal myth in the transition from Dada to

surrealism. We have seen that in the oil paintings of the early 1920s, such as *Les hommes n'en savent rien* (*Men Shall Know Nothing of This*; fig. 51), lacerated blood vessels, organs, and bowels that protrude from the terrestrial realm are no longer associated with infantile sexual research, but with a sublimating iconography composed of alchemical, hermetic, and psychoanalytic ingredients.¹¹ This allows the conclusion to be drawn that, from now on, the earth is a site of production where a yet unknown entity is coming into being, which emerges in *Woman, Old Man, and Flower* as the chimera of fan, breastplate, and lower half of the body. Its pointedly closed form extracts itself from the stone in which various organic fragments are still enclosed.¹² Iconographically, this form is later (in "Visions of Half-Sleep") identified as the phallic woman, and hence appointed as the guarantor of a fulfilled, flawless and non-castrated visuality. For a history of form, it is thus crucial that the phallic woman corresponds to a new solution to the problem of the platform. The represented platform continues to be an unstable stage set upon which, despite his shadow, the old man has no foothold and cannot be located. The chimera itself, however, appears in front of this stage set and may be standing firmly on a ground that evidently can also support furniture and potted plants. The shallow stage space that in most of the geological overpaintings had been formed from the ruins of illusionism (figs. 10, 12, 52), in *Woman, Old Man, and Flower* is split in two: on the one hand, there is the strip of landscape like a stage set along the lower edge of the picture, and, on the other hand, there is a platform on this side of the lower edge of the picture, offstage of the representation.¹³ Upon this firm ground, the simulacrum of a material and tangible body, assembled from various objects but nonetheless a unified form, makes its appearance. With particular clarity, the integration of surrogate parts and fragments into a unified form distinguishes the "blue flower" from the motifs of earth and femininity in Dadaism, from the *Frozen Landscapes, Icicles and Mineral Types of the Female Body, The Madam Hostess on the Lahn, or Stratified Rock . . . with Two Types of Perineal Ruptures*. The destructive gaze of the infantile sexual researcher is pacified; the painting stages the tellurian rebirth of form as the phallic woman, and this form stands upon firm ground (which, however, lies offstage of the picture).

The secondary use of illusionism has been transformed and, with it, the iconography of the earth. The unstable platform is duplicated and stabilized offstage; the woman as a chimera is closed into a unified form; the earth is achieved as the milieu in which this surrealist coming into form takes place. *Woman, Old*

FIGURE 54
 Pablo
 Picasso, *Au
 Bon Marché*,
 January 1913.
 23.5 × 31
 cm, oil and
 pasted paper
 on board,
 Aachen,
 Ludwig
 Collection. ©
 2012 Estate
 of Pablo
 Picasso /
 Artists Rights
 Society (ARS),
 New York.



Man, and Flower thus prepares Ernst's surrealism inasmuch as it sets the conditions for both *Natural History* and "Visions of Half-Sleep": it establishes the earth as the site of surrealist image production and the phallic woman as the guarantor of a surrealist visuality. The clear formal differences between the painting and the prints made only one year later are thus all the more astounding: in 1924 there is a fastidiously worked-over, rigid, and ponderous oil painting; in 1925 there are pulsating and metamorphic surfaces. This most striking difference that separates Ernst's surrealist pictures from those of the early 1920s can also be conceived as a further stage in the formal history of the theme of the earth.

Attention should be drawn to a painting from around 1923, *un tremblement de terre très doux* (*A Very Gentle Earthquake*; fig. 55). It displays a surface that—unlike the mortifying finish of *Woman*, *Old Man*, and *Flower*—continues and thematically appropriates prewar modernism's experiments with facture. Between the erratic traces of painting and the earthquake iconography, a mimetic analogy arises, in the sense that both the surface of the painting and that of the earth become unstable. The structural problematic of the modernist painting—that a zone of instability opens near to the picture's lower edge, where the platform had extended in the illusionistic picture—thus undergoes a thematic motivation.



FIGURE 55
Max Ernst, *A Very Gentle Earthquake* (*Un tremblement de terre très doux*), ca. 1923. 19 × 24 cm, oil on wood. Private collection (S/M no. 621). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

The “breaking away” of the platform becomes a moment of analogy formation between painting and earthquake. The entering into mimetic relationship of facture and tectonics is also demonstrated by the represented scene. The main motif is a rectangular block that seems to be in the process of sinking into the earth. Its upper surface, made from strips resembling floorboards, also exhibits a black hole, which likely serves to characterize the block as a hollow box. What we see here being swallowed by the earth turns out to be one of the hollowed-out and unstable stages that Ernst discovered in the works of de Chirico, and which inspired the dismantled and unfolded landscapes of Ernst’s Dadaist overpaintings. While the surrogate of a platform disappears inside the earth, the painted surface of *A Very Gentle Earthquake* itself takes on the qualities this surrogate is no longer capable of visualizing. In the experiments with facture, heaviness and tangibility emerge as characteristics of the picture surface.

In the Dadaist overpaintings, the motif of the cloaca functions as the symptom of a lack, namely, the emaciation, blunting, and distortion of illusionism. In

Woman, Old Man, and Flower (1924), the surmounting of this lack is celebrated in the figure of the phallic woman, who arises from the mortified terrestrial realm and achieves a platform on this side of the picture. But in *A Very Gentle Earthquake* (ca. 1923), Ernst had already tested a poetic of the earth on the basis of the mimetic analogy between the earth's crust and the crust of paint. In the picture of the earthquake, the lack is made into a fullness, the sensory plenum that presents itself, as a repeatedly painted surface, in hatches, blots, and scratches, and that moreover enters into a mimetic exchange with the tellurian theme of the painting. Ernst will draw upon this exchange in the frottages (and later in the grattages), which, in the secondary fashion examined in chapter 1, establish a mimetic analogy with geologic processes such as fossilization and erosion.

The pressure and resistance of the horizontal work surface that serves in the rubbing of textures onto paper or canvas are more than mere conditions of production; these qualities remain present in the viewing of each individual picture. For example, in *Confidences* (fig. 23), although the leaf (*Laubblatt*) addresses us in its verticality and floats away like a ghost across the medial boundary, the horizontality of the drawing paper (*Zeichenblatt*) as a work surface is still present because the textures refer back to the horizontal situation in which they were made. They do so most aptly when the paper was rotated during rubbing, since the resulting textures attest with particular clarity to the tactile intimacy of production, the work with pressure and resistance that happens close to the body. It is as though the raising from the horizontal situation of working to the vertical situation of viewing did not occur as a single action, but was repeated many times in each viewing, as a pulsating movement. Again and again this movement leads from the ghostly leaf to the sheet of paper as the working surface, which the artist presses against the textured leather, works with a soft pencil, and occasionally also turns. The earth of *Natural History* is a matrix of secondary and simulacral images released from the rigidity of secondary illusionism, because heaviness and tangibility as essential characteristics of sensory plenitude have become factors in the production process and, moreover, because they experience an aesthetic actualization in the pulsating movement of the finished picture.

Ernst's tellurian thematics, from his petrified diagrams to his surrealist natural history, thus take on different meanings—from the site of the cloacal myth to the site of surrealist image production—according to how his artistic procedures change; and, conversely, new artistic procedures are repeatedly tested

on the theme of the earth, because in this theme, the crisis of the heaviness and tangibility of the image is articulated. In retrospect, from the viewpoint of surrealism, the critical transformation consisted in a (simulacral) reproduction of wholeness. Wholeness was restored in the imaginary, since the phantasm of the destroying and devouring mother was replaced by that of Leonardo's phallic mother. Simultaneously, it was restored in production, since the fossilized or otherwise destroyed qualities of tangibility and heaviness were brought back into effect in the making of frottage. And above all, it was restored in aesthetics, since the tactile procedure of frottage corresponds to a perception that is in itself tactilized: in other words, a perception that is affected by the seen and that itself affects the seen, a perception that surrenders itself to the instability of the image and also intensifies it—thus, a perception that behaves actively and also passively, similar to the sense of touch. From this perspective, the surrealist seeing of resemblances can be interpreted as a secondary reproduction of imaginary, procedural, and aesthetic qualities that in Dada were taken apart from one another and mortified. This being said, in summary, it must be emphasized again that in this unity there persists a divide, which Ernst thematizes in “Visions of Half-Sleep” as the bodily separation of the artist and the transparent female figure, and in the last print of *Natural History* as an unattainably pure visibility. Surrealist seeing as Ernst understood it thus only follows the model of a perception in which seeing and touching both play a role inasmuch as it simultaneously positions itself at a radical distance from palpable reality. In print 34, the figure of Eve is located on a threshold: beyond her, a realm of pure transparency opens; this side is dominated by the dazzling light of a camera flash; and between these two forms of intensified visibility, a fossil layer of tactility is spread. In view of this primacy of seeing, which has withdrawn from the physical world in order to reproduce it as secondary, it's no wonder that heaviness and density, and with them the tellurian themes, vanish again from Ernst's art. By around 1930, the time has come. At this moment, Ernst's engagement with the body of the image, which has occupied him so intensively from the petrified diagrams of Dadaism to the grattages, seems to lose significance. In what follows, I would like to outline this process, and, in doing so, I would like to turn specifically to the work that once again will confront surrealist seeing with a resistant *physis*.

THE SEEING OF RESEMBLANCES TRANSFORMED

Beginning in the mid-1920s, Max Ernst constantly sought new stimuli with which to test the seeing of resemblances in its different forms. In our context, it is noteworthy that in doing so, he detached himself from the thematic association with the earth as ground and matrix, as well as from the textures basic to frottage, which were indeterminate with regard to motif. Besides wood grain, textured leather, and patterns, relief postcards and other figurally predetermined underlays were now put to use. The simulacra of prehistoric nature mingle with the simulacra of obsolete visual culture. In the Loplop series, the surrealist's studio is opened to view with its various matrices that provoke the seeing of resemblances, from the linear ornament that undergoes metamorphoses and can contain reversible images all the way to the marbled paper that activates the potential and powers of the seeing of resemblances as if while in a state of idling.¹ The latter, a seeing of resemblances that incites the animation of surfaces and lends them a pulsating depth without taking shape in distinct motifs, absorbs even materials that presumably resist this effect: specifically, the popular wood engravings that Ernst employed in his collage novels. If one compares works from 1922 with *The Hundred-Headed Woman* (*La femme 100 têtes*) from 1929 (fig. 56), it is evident what power the animating seeing of resemblances had achieved after 1925. While the early collages seal their material in a hard surface, the later ones cause this surface to pulsate. Hatching gains a suggestive power similar to the dark ground that functions, in the frottages, as the pre-morphic projection screen for the seeing of resemblances. In order to illustrate the breadth of possibilities with which Ernst was working, it is also worth mentioning his trip to Maloja in 1934, where he found egg-shaped stones in the detritus of the glacier and chiseled



FIGURE 56

Max Ernst, *The Hundred-Headed Woman Opens Her August Sleeve* (*La femme 100 têtes ouvre sa manche auguste*). From *La femme 100 têtes*, 1929, chapter 3. 30 × 14.2 cm, collage (S/M no. 1449). © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

them into metamorphic figures.² From mass-produced popular illustrations to granite, every surface can become a projection screen for imaginative perception.

The testing of the seeing of resemblances on ever new materials and themes dissolved the relationship to the theme of the earth, which had been constitutive for the frottages of *Natural History*. This theme was now only one possibility among others, in playing with analogies for the process of making pictures. What's more, in softening the hardness of facture and formal articulation that characterized his work prior to *Natural History*, Ernst found a new approach to the medium of painting. While his most important paintings from the early 1920s had featured a conspicuous secondariness, as if painting had been reduced to an inflexible medium for copying preexisting images, by the mid-1920s he started to become interested in the fluidity and amorphous quality of paint as a resource for picturing the very emergence of images. The transfer of the frottage method to painting was crucial. He produced his grattages by spreading a loose canvas on the floor, placing objects such as pieces of rope or boards underneath, applying paint, and then scraping it off while still wet. In a second step, the streaks, blurs, and blots that resulted from this procedure were interpreted as forests or wild creatures (fig. 57). A similar technique for creating random figurations that could be interpreted in multiple ways consisted in throwing a piece of rope onto a canvas covered with wet paint. One way or another, the aim was to transform the painting into a screen that entices and, at the same time, registers the fantasies of its beholders.

In his mission statements of the late 1920s and the 1930s, too, as has often been observed, Ernst gives central importance to such a de-differentiation of seeing and imagining. As we have seen, in "How to Force Inspiration," the seeing of resemblances coalesces into the theoretical foundation of surrealist poetics and becomes the shared origin of grattage, frottage, and also collage. In his first monograph, published in 1937 by *Cahiers d'Art*, Ernst further develops this art-historical position.³ Moreover, the seeing of resemblances preoccupied the entire surrealist group—the members examined its effects in joint experiments and through an array of procedures.⁴ In the most important surrealist mission statement from the early 1930s, *Communicating Vessels* (*Les Vases communicants*), André Breton devoted himself to the psychology and politics of the seeing of resemblances. "Tout fait l'image."⁵ (Everything makes images.) Whatever imaginative



FIGURE 57
Max Ernst,
*The Court of
the Dragon I*
(*La Cour du
Dragon I*).
From *Une
semaine de
bonté*, 1934,
chapter 3. 15
× 12.5 cm,
collage (S/M
no. 1966).
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Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

perception absorbs brings hidden pictures to light. Leonardo's wall stains are cited as paradigmatic evidence.⁶

VISIONARY POLITICS

The success of the seeing of resemblances was also the basis for the surrealist politics of the 1930s. The surrealists, specifically Breton but also Ernst, had to expend great polemic effort in order to oppose the obligation of content and party affiliation that was increasingly being demanded by Leftist writers and artists as a means of class warfare and resistance to the Fascist threat. Breton, who had already been through several conflicts with the French Communist Party pertaining to this question,⁷ insisted upon a historicity unique to art and upon art's autonomy. Ernst made it plain that he agreed with his friend entirely on this point. In his answer to the survey "Où va la peinture?" ("Where Is Painting Headed?"), conducted in 1935 by *Commune*, the organ of the Communist Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) (Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists), he posited that the "manifest or latent ideological content" of a picture did not depend on the painter's conscious decision-making.⁸ The unconscious, Breton and Ernst agree, does not grant access to a realm of individual discretion; rather, it communicates with a collective unconscious, which the individual instance represents. Through this mediation, art and poetry are brought into connection with the political questions of the present and, more importantly, the future. Expressions of the unconscious that appear obscure or nonsensical will one day attain perfect transparency. In *Political Position of Today's Art* (*Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui*; 1935), Breton underscores this hope by pointing out that Édouard Manet's still lifes were received by his contemporaries as opaque blots of paint, while today they are remarkable for their virtually photographic precision. The same will also be the case for surrealist poetry and painting, as Breton attempts to illustrate with a geologic metaphor: "The climate of Benjamin Peret's poetry or Max Ernst's painting will be the very climate of life."⁹ Surrealist art is thus a revolutionary weapon inasmuch as it anticipates a (post-)revolutionary future. The relentlessness with which Breton defended this sense of the future becomes particularly vivid in the example of the "Aragon affair." Louis Aragon, who starting in 1930 had moved pronouncedly away from surrealism and toward

a Soviet position, in 1932 wrote *The Red Front* (*Le Front rouge*), an incendiary poem (stylistically not at all surrealist), in which he calls for the killing of police officers and, in addition, urges opening fire on Léon Blum and the Social Democrats. The French judiciary's request that Aragon be held accountable for such acts was met, on the part of the surrealist group, by a pamphlet extolling the juridical and moral unaccountability of the poet. It was not he himself but the powers of the unconscious that were expressed in the poem; these powers were not demanding an individual act in the present but were prophesying collective action in a revolutionary future.¹⁰ This retreat to the unaccountability of automatic writing provoked unanimous derision from Leftist writers. The Belgian surrealists protested bitterly against their Parisian friends, and Aragon, who had authored *The Red Front* in order to prove his revolutionary convictions to the party, declared his break with surrealism in a press release published in *L'Humanité*. Breton went on the defensive. In *Misère de la poésie* (*Misery of Poetry*), he openly admitted in what little esteem he held *The Red Front* as a poem and once again stated the standpoint of the surrealist group, which explicitly gave him its support in *Paillasse!* (*Slut!*), another proclamation, also signed by Ernst.¹¹

In the dispute with the French Communist Party, the surrealists found themselves compelled to differentiate between artistic and political revolution, which early surrealism had specifically intended not to do.¹² It is poetry and painting's sense of the future (and not their manifest content) that justifies why art can also become a revolutionary activity with a unique character. Artistic technique possesses its own historicity, which cannot be reduced to major political events such as the French Revolution or the Paris Commune. Technique, however, attains its own political efficacy if it is able to make seeing and imagining indistinguishable. Visual parapraxes—like slips of the tongue, dreams, or chance encounters—were considered symptoms, and symptoms not only bring a buried past into appearance; they also speak of a future of fulfilled desires, and in this way incite revolutionary acts. In *Communicating Vessels* (1933), Breton defends his optimistic conception of the unconscious, on the one hand, against Freud's conviction of the implacability of the drives and, on the other hand, against the Communist disinterest in the affective. He refers to the example of his own dream of August 26, 1931, which he subjects to an extensive analysis. In this dream, there appears a cartographic reversible image:

While going through the stock of ties again, another salesman, middle-aged, talks to me about a tie called “Nosferatu,” of which he used to sell a lot two years ago, but he is afraid that he has none left. I am the one to discover this tie immediately among the others. It is garnet red, and on its points there stands out in white and, at least on the visible point—once it has been knotted—twice, the face of Nosferatu, which is at the same time the map of France, empty, with scarcely any marks at all, on which the eastern border is very sketchily traced in green and blue, so that I think it looks like rivers, outlining in a surprising way the makeup of the vampire. I am eager to show this tie to my friends.¹³

Nosferatu counts among the surrealist threshold deities, since the vampire’s existence and erotic desire proves the permeability of even the most clearly defined boundary, that between life and death.¹⁴ The dream connects the despot of the East with Germany, and thus also with the German woman whom Breton had unsuccessfully pursued a short time before.

Once again, the dream realizes simultaneously here two sorts of desires, the first being that of speaking freely to this woman; the second, that of suppressing every cause of misunderstanding, patriotically exploitable, between France, where I live, and the marvelous country, made of thought and light, which saw Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx born in a single century.¹⁵

The garnet-colored necktie, which shows the face of Nosferatu as well as the French territory, without the rivers and with an open boundary to the East, corresponds to the desire to deterritorialize France. The visual parapraxis expresses the hope that the mythic geography of the East (as represented by Nosferatu, German philosophers, and a German woman) will annihilate the French hexagon. This trust in the Germany of “Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx” would also inflect the surrealists’ first official statement after Hitler’s seizure of power, and for its own part is inflected by the view, dominant among Leftists and Rightists alike, that Germany was the Other *par excellence*, more remote than India or China.¹⁶

Breton’s theory of parapraxis elevates the seeing of resemblances to a prophetic gift that discovers political directives in geographic fantasies. When, in the same sequence, Breton arrives at the previously quoted insight, “Tout fait l’image,” there opens up to him an inexhaustible source for reinterpreting the

world and for conceiving of this reinterpretation as a revolutionary activity. Ernst also drew from this. In his first monograph, he cites in a note the following report from Nazi Germany and moreover provides the exact source (*Oberbadisches Volksblatt* from February 1934):

POLITICAL OVERZEALOUSNESS

Pathological Imagination

Recently, the authorities have received a large number of postcards, pictures, and posters, in which the scent of hidden Communist propaganda has been detected. In the hair of a head, although it is a photograph, someone imagines he has discovered the face of Lenin, together with an obscene picture in the flesh of the ear. On a poster, someone has found concealed a bashed-in skull and the head of a Communist. Granted, the viewer of this poster, which is normally pasted or hung, has to stand on his head in order to enjoy the picture-puzzle. The authorities will oppose such political overzealousness, which causes unnecessary alarm among the population and is harmful to legitimate interests. The authorities have been directed to suppress this nonsensical behavior, which can easily erupt into a dangerous psychosis.¹⁷

The denunciatory frenzy shows oddly familiar, typically surrealist symptoms. It proceeds according to the motto “*Tout fait l’image*.” One might suppose that Ernst intended to point out the danger that the annihilation of the reality principle could play into the hands of the worst enemies of the surrealist revolution. Salvador Dalí’s escapades involving the use of his “paranoiac-critical method” either to find Hitler’s facial features or to conceal them in his pictures¹⁸ provided enough of a reason to mistrust a politics of imaginative seeing. However, if one reads the citation from the *Oberbadisches Volksblatt* together with the main text, this interpretation proves to be false. The citation is rather intended to demonstrate the opposite: even in Nazi Germany, the unconscious is on the side of the surrealist revolution. Ernst makes use of the citation to praise his most famous procedure, collage: “What is the most noble conquest of collage? The irrational. The magisterial eruption of the irrational in all domains of art, poetry, science, and fashion; in the private life of individuals, in the public life of nations. He who speaks of collage speaks of the irrational.”¹⁹

In the footnote that follows, the observation that collage allows the irrational to intrude into the “life of nations”—that is, into politics—Ernst cites the report

from the *Oberbadisches Volksblatt*. But what does the paranoid seeing of resemblances as it consumes Germans faithful to the regime have to do with collage? It is capable of exemplifying collage's power because, in his surrealist mission statements, Ernst has attempted to trace the procedure back to visual parapraxes, and thus to relate it to the same origin as frottage and grattage (see chapter 3). Imaginative seeing is surrealism's own special weapon not least because it conducts surrealist subversion even in Nazi Germany. It finds Lenin in the hair and an obscene picture in the ear of a single head. In this way, it opened to the Germans a revolutionary future, which they in their denunciatory zeal closed off again: the future of the proletarian revolution of production conditions (Lenin) and the surrealist revolution of life (obscene pictures). The footnote with the citation from the *Oberbadisches Volksblatt* is not included in the English version of the text, which was published as *Beyond Painting* in 1948.²⁰ I assume that, in retrospect, this specific example of the surrealist commitment to hidden images as a political weapon must have seemed rather frivolous and naive, given the political violence unleashed by Nazism. In the 1930s, however, the footnote mocked two different targets, both Nazism and the Stalinist Left, and should be seen within the intellectual-historical context of the wider discussion, led by Georges Bataille and Ernst Bloch, among others, of how the irrational, heterogeneous, romantic, and other forces counter to Enlightenment could be reclaimed from their use by Fascism.

IMAGINATION BREAK

It seems as though the surrealists and Max Ernst in specific staked everything on imaginative seeing in order to create revolutionary pictures. In the following, however, I would like to assert that Ernst's most important picture of the 1930s, *l'Europe après la pluie* (*Europe after the Rain*; plate 4), made in 1933, questions this faith in a seeing that draws from imaginative depths and, as an alternative, explores a pictorial form that situates imagination on the surface of the picture.

The established art-historical interpretation tends in another direction. It consists of the nearly unanimous consensus that the picture is also visionary, though in a completely different sense than Breton's and Ernst's cited statements from the 1930s would lead one to suppose: it is agreed that the painting can be understood as a premonition of the destruction that would ensue in the Second

World War.²¹ The first to make this interpretation was Carola Giedion-Welcker, albeit with pronounced caution and a fine sense for surrealist defamiliarization strategies. On the occasion of the first Max Ernst retrospective, which was on view in the major museums of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1963, Giedion-Welcker, a longtime friend of the artist and at that time the painting's owner, wrote:

The subject of "Europe after the rain," which appears in different variations, is first treated in 1933 in a mysterious map, like a relief map, which reflects a premonition of the bewildering territorial shifts that were yet to come. The geography, which seems familiar but here is reconstructed from fully dissociated elements ("le dépaysement"), carries out its deranging and deranged game with the viewer.²²

Without a doubt, it was Ernst's desire, and the desire of all the other surrealists, to create pictures and texts of premonition. However, admiring their visions for having held true probably says more about the moment of this admiration than about the artistic and historical situation in which the visionary pictures were created. Giedion-Welcker's interpretation is grounded in an aesthetic experience that the great art critic could only have had after 1945. Toward the end of the Second World War, Jean Dubuffet and other French artists made paintings with desiccated surfaces, as if they had been melted down and then left to harden. *Europe after the Rain* must have seemed to its owner like a "premonition" of the Second World War because it anticipated the artistic methods of postwar art and may well also have inspired them.

In consideration of the year 1933, however, the question is raised as to what type of future the surrealists wanted to prophesy, and what form they wanted to give to their prophecies. With regard to the first question, which concerns the political content of surrealist visions, it is entirely improbable that prewar and postwar conceptions would agree. The surrealists longed for nothing more ardently than the demise of European civilization, but, of course, they understood this to mean something entirely different from the devastation that would in fact come to pass. Before I pursue this first question further, I will turn to the second question, that of the form of the visionary in *Europe after the Rain*.

Work on the painting began with a chance occurrence. The picture support was a found object that Ernst discovered in the Billancourt studios during the

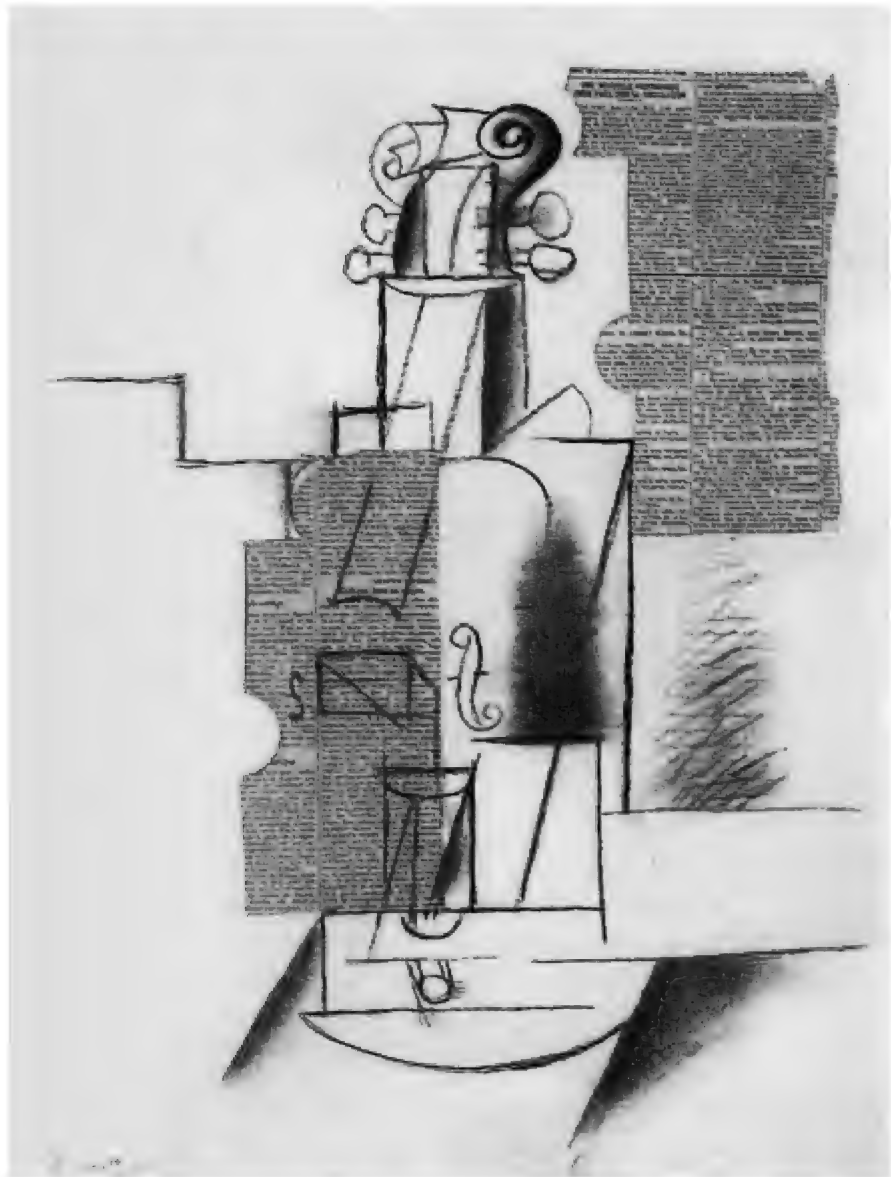
filming of *The Golden Age* (*L'Age d'or*). In 1969, during a conversation with Robert Lebel, he recalled how he discovered the panel and knew right away that it was another case of “Leonardo’s famous wall, which had played such an important role in my ‘Visions of Half-Sleep.’”²³ Like the imitation mahogany in the “Visions,” the studio set also serves as a surrogate for Leonardo’s stained wall, as a “visual irritant” that provokes an imaginative perception governed by parapraxes. In one of the Loplop pictures from 1930, for which Ernst used parts of the studio set as a painting ground, the modeling of the figure of the bird in fact develops out of the plaster surface of the set.²⁴ However, three years later, in *Europe after the Rain*, an entirely different effect is produced. To be sure, Ernst’s remark that the studio sets from Billancourt reminded him of Leonardo’s famous wall encourages the search for comparable motifs. In several of the coastlines and also along the boundaries between smooth and rough parts of the picture surface, it might in fact be possible to detect legible forms. And in certain zones, the rough texture of the plaster suggests the feathering of birds, the motif most often concealed in Ernst’s paintings. But in comparison with Ernst’s other works of the late 1920s and 1930s, it is conspicuously difficult to animate the irregular relief of the picture surface and to make out forms within it. The most important organ of surrealism—the imagination’s eye—is indeed stimulated, but it is not allowed free play, as is possible in Breton’s interpretation of the dream of the Nosferatu necktie, in Ernst’s memories of childhood, and in the majority of his paintings. The rubbed or scraped grounds of frottage and grattage open a suggestive ground that offers sustenance to the imagining eye. *Europe after the Rain* may also contain hidden figures, but they remain under the spell of the desiccated texture and do not detach themselves as discernible motifs. After the catastrophe, the old continent offers to surrealist perception only an austere and thoroughly resistant surface. This becomes particularly clear in comparison with the second version of this subject, made in 1940 (fig. 60). The transfer technique (decalcomania) employed in this work is exceptionally well suited to the creation of suggestive blots and other imagination zones, which are interpreted by the artist as a half-melted, half-hardened landscape, and populated with Europa riding the bull and other mythical forms. They inspire the viewer to search for additional faces and figures in the spots and streaks. Imaginative seeing comes upon an iconographic abundance, which in part is plainly evident, and in part can be supplemented and imagined further, depending upon how responsive one is to

the play of resemblances. By contrast, the painted and multiply fissured plaster in *Europe after the Rain* deflects the gaze.

Of course, coastlines and territorial boundaries have a notable aptitude for harboring reversible images,²⁵ and someone very familiar with Ernst's paintings would probably be able to recognize, in the outlines of the inland body of water at the center of the picture or in the light blue zone of the sea, to the right, one of the artist's typical bird figures. (Given the title, it would be tempting to search for *Europa* and the bull.) But this recognizing, if it happens at all, does not function with the same ease as in many other of Ernst's surrealist paintings. It seems as if the painting forces us to look for potential or hidden figures, but we end up being unable to detach them from the devastated ground of the painting. Not even the simplest mechanism of the seeing of resemblances, which is engaged almost every time we look at a map—that is, the reading of familiar territories into geographic givens—seems to work when we look at *Europe after the Rain*. The distinctive figures of Europe—such as the Italian boot, the French hexagon, the Iberian animal's head—have vanished, and new territorial divisions have been drawn straight across the land with the arbitrariness of colonial boundaries, or else follow intricate forms whose motivation is no less opaque. The one central resemblance that certainly strikes the viewer of the painting is specifically not developed through an imaginative seeing that brings hidden elements of the picture into view, animates the formless ground, or reads the contours for their latent motifs. Rather, it is the result of an operation carried out upon the manifest surface of the picture. The object of this operation was formerly the Mediterranean Sea, the single geographic characteristic that produces the relationship to Europe's familiar form before the deluge. It is at once an evident and bewildering relationship, since it involves neither distortion (through erosion, flooding, or other external influences) nor a tectonic shift (through drifting apart or collision). The Mediterranean can really only be described as having undergone a reflection, which has shifted the Black Sea from east to west, as if Europe had been folded along the north–south axis. This operation refers back to Picasso's poetics of folding and turning, for example, as in the rotation of the newspaper page in *Violin* (fig. 58).

Ernst's statement from 1969 that he had once again discovered Leonardo's wall stains in the studio sets of Billancourt thus conceals how *Europe after the Rain* differs from other influential works of surrealism. John Russell already indicated

FIGURE 58
Pablo
Picasso, *Violin*
(*Violine*),
end of 1912.
62 × 47 cm,
pasted paper
and charcoal.
Paris, Centre
Pompidou,
Musée
Nationale
d'Art
moderne. ©
2012 Estate
of Pablo
Picasso /
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York.



the exceptional status of this picture when he wrote: "Nothing could be further from the rampant narcissism of conventional 'Surrealist painting' than this somber and premonitory image."²⁶ The picture support is in fact similar to Leonardo's wall, but its mortified surface presents an impediment to the animating and figuring effect of imaginative seeing. One can also glimpse in it the reflexive negativity of the surrealist imagination, which directs itself against surrealism's own procedures and the mode of perception they provoke. *Europe after the Rain* promotes the seeing of resemblances in the way a pre-morphic pictorial ground simply does, and it also blocks this imaginative perception. This is a reflexive form of negativity that precedes the provocation of the negated. In *Europe* as it has emerged again from out of the floodwaters, the earth as a matrix of images has not simply been reduced to nothing. The picture marks the zero level of surrealist perception; within it is sealed the dark, pre-morphous ground in which the seeing of resemblances follows the trace of desires, both erotic and political.

REVOLUTION AND NATURAL HISTORY

Operations of turning or folding, as they were previously practiced in Picasso's *papiers collés*, transform the orientation of the image. It becomes a horizontal work surface and can still be experienced as such when it is viewed as a vertically oriented painting hanging on the wall.²⁷ In *Europe after the Rain*, besides the imaginary fold that has shifted the Black Sea from east to west, there are other, more concrete traces of this type of horizontal implementation of the image. I am referring to the cartographic symbols: the red lines of the ship routes are most immediately striking. While most of these connect two ports in straight lines, some follow the coasts, lead almost all the way to an island without touching it, or seem to stray without any objective. These routes indicate a population of seafarers and adventurers who have survived the flood and are now exploring the unknown shores of the destroyed continent. A ship route even crosses the inland body of water west of the "Black Sea." The territorial boundaries—of which some have been drawn across the relief using a straight edge and some have been drawn freehand—attest to early, already cartographically documented attempts at colonization. Of actual settlements, or even cities, there is no clear trace—not even at the nodal points of the sea routes. A few black circles could denote outposts. All these signs enable visualization of the horizontal condition

in which maps are spread out in order to mark ways or bases; moreover, these signs indicate an openness to the future, since they enable the map's future users to orient themselves in the new Europe, and possibly also to make new markings. Perhaps these are also only projected routes and boundaries, and perhaps their purpose is to encourage investigation of a still entirely unknown area of the earth. In any case, it is reasonable to suppose that in these markings, which report of an already accomplished or else planned rediscovery of the obliterated continent, there is a political meaning: the surrealists look forward to a catastrophe in order to explore Europe after its destruction as the *terra incognita* of revolutionary life. *Europe after the Rain* is thus in fact a prophetic picture, but it has a different content than most art-historical interpreters think. In addition, it is differently formed than most surrealist pictures, since it does not rely upon the seeing of resemblances, as all of them do; neither does it correspond to surrealist theories about the political function of the imagination.

Meanwhile, the painting's sense of the future is the product of two times: first, the pre-future of the catastrophe to which the title refers; it will have already come to pass when, second, the yet unconcluded and also unforeseeable future after the revolution begins, to which the markings on the map attest. The destruction is the precondition for registering new routes, boundaries, and way stations, which indicate the possibility of a surrealist life.

The history in surrealism of the motifs of rain, catastrophe, and geographical transformation supports this reading. In surrealism, rain has an exclusively positive meaning as the image of the passive, fluent, and fertilizing language of automatism: one need only recall the opening image of *Natural History* or text 16 from Breton's *Soluble Fish*, dedicated to the liberating precipitation of automatic writing.²⁸

Fossilization, hardening, as well as overflowing, inundation, and other geological upheavals that instigate the reversion of urban civilization to nature are read by the surrealists in the way they read rain: as allegories of unconscious powers. Ernst's earthquake pictures, paintings such as *Paris Dream* (*Paris-Rêve*), and many of his collages represent the surrealist territory as a post-catastrophic landscape.²⁹ A world map (fig. 59) published in 1929 in the surrealism issue of the Belgian avant-garde magazine *Variétés* explicates the political thrust of these destruction fantasies. It shows the annihilation of the Western world and the growth of Germanophone, Russian, and other areas, which, from the perspective



FIGURE 59
The World in the Time of the Surrealists
 (Le monde au temps des Surréalistes).
 From *Variétés: Revue mensuelle illustrée de l'esprit contemporain*, 1929.

of Paris, are part of the barbaric East. From there, revolutionary hordes would invade, from whom the surrealists expected one main feat: the annihilation of the French state and its ruling class.³⁰ The critique of party Communism was also formulated in geographic metaphors. Breton follows a joke about the USSR, that it is content to explore territories opened up a long time ago, with the surrealist promise to explore unknown regions and write a new geography.³¹ Another example representative of the motif world of the surrealists' historical/political revolution fantasies is Aragon's description of geological catastrophe as sexual climax.³² *Europe after the Rain* is to be understood within the context of this surrealist wish for upheavals and catastrophes, and is thus only a dark premonition inasmuch as pessimism regarding the existent cannot be separated from revolutionary hope.

Against the background of the political fantasies of surrealism and following a closer observation of the picture, its established interpretation as a prophecy of the Second World War is no longer self-evident. The map of Europe documents a post-catastrophic future; however, the surrealists looked forward to destructive "dépaysement" (disorientation) in the form of cataclysms that would clear space for new routes.³³ With this contextual interpretation and the excavation of the

“futures past” (Reinhart Koselleck) of the surrealists’ revolutionary fantasies to which the painting attests, a more important question has already in part been answered: How did Ernst change the form of the revolutionary picture? How does the reflexive negation of the seeing of resemblances determine the sense of the future in *Europe after the Rain*? The painting’s sense of the future does not lie in imaginary depths, in the place where surrealism generally located it, but in the narrative lines of the ship routes.

CARTOGRAPHIC PAINTING

If we again enumerate the artistic procedures that Max Ernst used in order to make the map legible as a description and design of a revolutionary future, it becomes evident that these procedures generate a painting that above all is a surface. As a surface, it closes itself off from the pulsating depth typical of Ernst’s surrealism and from the simulacral/mimetic qualities of his pictures. The painting of post-catastrophic Europe does not pilot imaginative seeing into depths, but into a space of imaginary operations carried out with and upon the surface of the picture support. While the folding has already been carried out and cannot be repeated, the picture shows cartographic operations that designate the destroyed continent as a space of narrative possibilities. This attempt to answer the political radicalization of 1933 with a picture that opens not a simulacral but an operational space is distinguished by its iconographic reserve, a quality that becomes particularly clear in comparison with Ernst’s other famous political pictures of the 1930s, for example, the second version of *Europe after the Rain*, which was made in 1940 following the Phoney War (fig. 6o). The movement away from depth as a pulsating space that promises hidden pictures and iconographic significance, and toward the surface upon which all operations, past and present, remain visible, is an exact measure of the distance that Gilles Deleuze sees between “archaeological” and “cartographic art.”³⁴ Surrealism may be considered archaeological art because it places its trust in the dark origins, the pre-morphic ground, or the reversible contours that elicit visual parapraxes, which bring a buried history to light and lead the way to a revolutionary future. Ernst’s “Visions of Half-Sleep” is indebted to this model, as are his surrealist pictures, which, as deferred activations, always refer back to a dark origin and simultaneously, like Eve in *Natural History*, promise the lifting of the spell of infantile prehistory. In



FIGURE 60
Max Ernst,
Europe after the Rain II
(*L'Europe après la pluie II*) (detail),
1940–42. 55
× 128 cm.
Hartford,
Wadsworth
Atheneum
(S/M no.
2395). © 2012
Artists Rights
Society (ARS),
New York /
ADAGP, Paris.

Europe after the Rain, this visual as well as psychic dimension of depth is broken up and hardened into a desiccated surface that allows no metamorphoses, no deferred activation, no latent images to be released. The picture's sense of the future does not emerge from the dark depths of a buried past. The new Europe offers itself as an unknown and unconscious territory of future travels and adventures.

The one past moment to which *Europe after the Rain* refers is the catastrophe that obliterates the whole past. This consists of a series of natural cataclysms: a rain of fire that has melted the earth, a breaking up of the earth's crust that has led to the folding and reflection of the continent, and a deluge that has cooled the earth's molten surface and distributed new bodies of water like puddles across it. The traces of these cataclysms appear on the map as if it had been subject to the same forces as the continent it represents. The painting *Europe after the Rain* seems to have originated from the same cataclysms as the new Europe that can be seen in the painting. Map and continent are not only related to one another through projection, but also and perhaps more strongly through material contact, as two kinds of traces of the same natural force. The painting is then no longer exclusively a human artifact. This double significance as natural product and instrument is correlative to two different measures of time: catastrophe and shock in

the history of nature, on the one hand, and openness to the future of travel and adventure, on the other. The great upheaval seems to be an event unavailable to action; the human only appears as an agent in the post-revolutionary landscape. The routes sketch trails of a somnambulistic movement, which, after the surrealist revolution, life in general will be able to follow. Ernst abandons the position of the visionary who, seeing the future in the darkness of psychic depths, allows it to emerge in an iconography laden with significance, as in the second version of *Europe after the Rain*. As a cartographer, upon a mortified surface, he opens up a space of narrative that neither encapsulates the surrealist historical fantasies in its content, nor allows them to emerge from a mythic deep time, but rather translates them into lines of movement.

FOLDING TIME

In the early 1930s, Max Ernst tested operations such as folding, shifting, and turning in the collages of the Loplop series, in which these procedures are performed by the artist's alter ego, the bird creature Loplop.³⁵ While here Ernst designates his art as the product of various artistic devices and tricks, in *Europe after the Rain* this is precisely not the case; instead, the folding originates in an event that deformed the picture support even before the cartographer's markings were registered. This in turn most directly recalls Dadaist works such as *Portable Handbook* (fig. 7), which shows a sequence of shifts upon an eroded support. In terms of procedural logic, *Portable Handbook* is particularly close to the first *Europe* picture, because *Europe after the Rain* also does not place on view the processing of its surface as a freely available operation, but rather as a procedure that cannot be separated from the rigidified condition of the picture. Every operation carried out upon or with these surfaces is connected to the heaviness and materiality that the support takes on as the result of a geologic process.

The cut that *Europe after the Rain* marks, as a cartographic picture by a thoroughly "archeological" painter in search of psychic depth, proves in the context of Ernst's oeuvre to be the fold that lays the surrealist works over the geologic Dada pictures.³⁶ In 1933 Ernst again worked with a mortified surface and allowed the sovereign availability of operations carried out upon and with this surface to be wrecked by it. Nevertheless, the optimism that the shipping routes register in

the postdiluvian world clearly distinguishes the painting from the works made after the failed November Revolution. In the revolutionary map of 1933, Ernst again makes use of artistic methods from his first distinctly Dadaist pictures, and at the same time corrects their mocking defeatism by forging post-revolutionary trails through the mortified surface.

AFTERWORD

WALTER BENJAMIN

AND

MAX ERNST

In May 1935 Theodor Adorno offered to arrange a meeting between Walter Benjamin and Max Ernst. Benjamin seemed very taken with the idea. Whether he then actually made the artist's acquaintance is unknown.¹ However, this encounter had taken place in his thoughts many years earlier, as publicly expressed in the gloss "Dream Kitsch" from 1927 and the major essay on surrealism from 1929.² It has therefore been seductive for art history to consult Benjamin as a theoretical authority and to relate his thoughts on the nineteenth century as the prehistory of modernism, which are partially based on an engagement with Ernst, back to Ernst again.³ Conversely, the question has also been raised of to what extent Ernst's pictures can be interpreted as an anticipation of Benjamin's speculations on the historical and medial constitution of modern subjectivity.⁴ A study like the one to be found in this book, which examines the problem of how Ernst's works articulate historical breaks and what interpretation of these breaks they offer, must also clarify its own relationship to Benjamin. In contrast to the stated alternatives—the use of Benjamin's theses as a theoretical authority, on the one hand, or the demonstration of how Ernst's pictures anticipate these theses, on the other—in what follows I would like to introduce Benjamin as a voice of dissent. That is, his writings are useful specifically because they stand in marked tension to surrealism, inasmuch as the latter came under the spell of the ghostly return of painting. At the same time, however, Benjamin's very last reflections on painting from 1938–40 reveal a surprising affinity to Ernst's critical turn against his own spectral art in *Europe after the Rain* (plate 4).

The one longer passage that Benjamin devoted to Ernst occurs in "Dream Kitsch," which was probably written as early as 1925 and published in 1927 in *Neue Rundschau*. In this passage, Benjamin discusses the frontispiece of the book *Répétitions*, jointly produced by Ernst and Paul Éluard. The print was based on one of Ernst's overpaintings, with which Benjamin was certainly unfamiliar—he

does not address its specific procedural logic in the text.⁵ Benjamin's description and allegoresis of the frontispiece comprise only six sentences, but these are highly compressed:

Répétitions is the name that Paul Éluard gives to one of his collections of poetry, for whose frontispiece Max Ernst has drawn four small boys. They turn their backs to the reader, to their teacher and his desk as well, and look out over a balustrade where a balloon hangs in the air. A giant pencil rests on its point in the windowsill. The repetition of childhood experience gives us pause: when we were little, there was as yet no agonized protest against the world of our parents. As children in the midst of that world, we showed ourselves superior. When we reach for the banal, we take hold of the good along with it—the good that is there (open your eyes) right before you.⁶

The first three sentences can easily be related to Ernst's picture, in which the children stand like pupils in front of a blackboard but look off into the distance. The monumental piece of chalk to the left evidently implies another kind of writing than that practiced on the blackboard. This kind of writing leads away from the classroom and follows the hot-air balloon that is floating away to the right, or else heads in the direction of the church that towers over the horizon, or beyond, into the invisible, distant realm of modern communication suggested by the telegraph pole on the far right. According to Benjamin, one can easily see in this picture an allegory of the superiority of children with regard to the disciplinary force employed by their parents and teachers. But what is the meaning of Benjamin's last sentence, which identifies the banal with the near, the graspable, and also the good? Indeed, the picture hinges on the replacement of the near and the tactile—the blackboard—by the remote expanse of the sky. But one could also read from the picture, as Benjamin does, that the sky takes on the tactile qualities of what it replaces, that distant space is brought as close to the figures as the chalk and blackboard previously had been. In fact, one has the impression that the schoolboys are trying to touch the sky with their hands.

As opposed to this situation in which distant space draws close and can be touched, an obsolete ideal of art insists upon aesthetic distance. Toward the end of "Dream Kitsch," Benjamin remarks, "What we used to call art begins at a distance of two meters from the body. But now, in kitsch, the world of things advances on the human being; it yields to his uncertain grasp and ultimately

fashions its figures in his interior.”⁷ But when distant space comes closer, why does the good also become graspable? In the early notes for *The Arcades Project*, written around 1928, Benjamin explicitly states the reason:

. . . How would it look as religion or mythology? We have no tactile <taktisch> relation to it. That is, we are trained to view things, in the historical sphere, from a romantic distance. To account for the directly transmitted inheritance is important. But it is still too early, for example, to form a collection. Concrete, materialistic deliberation on what is nearest is now required. Mythology, as Aragon says, drives things back into the distance. Only the presentation of what relates to us, what conditions us, is important. . . .⁸

Using the example of Louis Aragon’s *Paris Peasant*, Benjamin accuses surrealism of reveling in the remoteness of the recent past and transfiguring its foreignness into mythology, as the romantics had done with history. Benjamin himself is concerned with restoring tactile contact to the epoch of childhood, in the future perhaps through collecting, but at the moment through his work on *The Arcades Project*, in which the dreamlike encryption of the nineteenth century, its enraptured removal from the present, would be dispelled. The method that Benjamin prefers to use for the re-creation of this “nearest nearness” of the past is montage.⁹ As can further be read in his early notes for *The Arcades Project*, he credits montage with destroying the contemplation of the past as a remote and foreign realm, but simultaneously with bringing the magic of this contemplation into full view: “In the *Arcades Project*, contemplation must be put on trial. But it should defend itself brilliantly and justify itself.”¹⁰ As an example of this method, another early passage can be cited that leads us back to Ernst again, since in it Benjamin considers the same late nineteenth-century natural science illustrations that also formed a basis for the frottage series *Natural History* (figs. 35, 36, 40). (Incidentally, in the same year, 1929, that Benjamin read this and other prose pieces to Adorno and Horkheimer, Ernst exhibited the collage *Two Young Girls Riding across the Sky*, in which he also made use of one such illustration [fig. 38]).

When, as children, we were given those great encyclopedic works *World and Mankind*, *New Universe*, *The Earth*, wouldn’t our gaze always fall, first of all, on the color illustration of a “Carboniferous Landscape” or on “Lakes and Glaciers of the First Ice Age”? Such an ideal panorama of a barely elapsed

primeval age opens up when we look through the arcades that are found in all cities. Here resides the last dinosaur of Europe, the consumer. On the walls of these caverns, their immemorial flora, the commodity, luxuriates and enters, like cancerous tissue, into the most irregular combinations. A world of secret affinities: palm tree and feather duster, hair dryer and Venus de Milo, prosthesis and letter-writing manual come together here as after a long separation. The odalisque lies in wait next to the inkwell, priestesses raise aloft ashtrays like patens. These items on display are a rebus: and <how> one ought to read here the birdseed kept in the fixative-pan from a darkroom, the flower seeds beside the binoculars, the broken screws atop the musical score, and the revolver above the goldfish—is right on the tip of one’s tongue.¹¹

This reflection on the world of obsolete commodities is similar to the commentary on Ernst’s *Répétitions*. Old objects are worn out as if from too much handling, and by our taking hold of them again we can take part in the past from which they come, which has been detached from the present. This realization is visual: “When we reach for the banal, we take hold of the good along with it—the good that is there (open your eyes) right before you.” Thus, from an image (Ernst’s print), via the bodily appropriation of obsolete objects, Benjamin arrives at the sudden insight that is expressed in the injunction “open your eyes.” In the note written only shortly thereafter, he likewise begins with an image (the natural history illustration) in order to arrive at a second image (the shop window as rebus). The transition from one to the other is in turn described in a somatic metaphors. But unlike the world of childhood, which returns as a tactile experience, the commodity world of yesterday is brought back in a manner analogous to the growth of “cancerous tissue.”

The description of Ernst’s print in “Dream Kitsch” and the evocation of natural history illustrations are examples of Benjamin’s interest in bringing contemplation into view in all its magic. Meanwhile, the harsh transitions between individual thoughts and the obtrusiveness of the bodily metaphors point to his other goal of destroying contemplation and establishing in its place an intimate, bodily form of historical reference. The artifacts of the recent past appear foreign and can be assembled into seductive images, but in order for these images to become meaningful for the present, they have to come into our immediate bodily proximity, as excitations of the sense of touch or an inflammation beneath

the body's surface. Only through this transformation do images of the past become "dialectical images" that herald an awakening from the dreaming slumber of capitalism.

As important as images were for the formulation of Benjamin's theses—in addition to Ernst's collages, Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia I* or Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* could be cited¹²—he placed no hope in the modern easel painting. There survive two negative assessments Benjamin made of Ernst as a painter (both from the late 1920s), one in the context of private correspondence in which painting is polemically contrasted with writing, and the other in the essay on surrealism, in which Benjamin contrasts urban space with the space of painting.

In a letter of March 16, 1929, Benjamin thanked his school friend Alfred Cohn for the new notebook Cohn had given him:

In any case I want to send you by return post my warmest thanks for the new masterpiece, which has just arrived. It "gave the final curve and polish" (in the words of the *Bern Cycling News*) to my decision not to go to the Max Ernst exhibition at Flechtheim. The pages' front sides are years ahead of the best new painting (and their back sides, the best new painting criticism).¹³

Why Benjamin decided not to go to the Max Ernst exhibition after receiving the new notebook and why he praised this notebook in a curious metaphor at the expense of contemporary painting and art criticism become comprehensible if we consider how important this particular underlay was for Benjamin's work. Three months earlier he had already informed Cohn, who had been supplying him with these notebooks on a regular basis since 1927, that he would soon be needing a new one—he "could not face the idea" that his writing would be "homeless again."¹⁴ It seems that Benjamin did not go to the Galerie Flechtheim because he wanted to make use of his new notebook right away. In fact, in the letter to Cohn, he continues to be inspired by the newly received gift. His characterization of the notebook, that its pages' front and back sides are "years ahead of" the best new painting and art criticism, respectively, leads one to think of the relationship between recto and verso in the notebook, and thus refers to the aspect of Cohn's "masterpiece" that Benjamin most prized: its particularly thin, nearly transparent paper. In a letter from February 1929, Benjamin confesses to "a shameful weakness for this extremely thin, transparent yet excellent stationery."¹⁵ It permitted him, while writing, to perceive what had already been written, and to immerse himself

not only in the individual pages, but in the notebook as a whole. What's more, his remarkably small writing attests to the importance to him of bodily nearness to the material underlay and traces of ink. In writing, Benjamin always wanted to feel the tactile space of his immediate surroundings. Against this background, it also becomes clearer why he thought modern painting was antiquated in comparison with Cohn's notebooks. He thought of painting—also Ernst's painting, which was on view in 1929 at the Galerie Fletheim—as an art that “begins at a distance of two meters from the body” and thus belongs in the past. Writing, however, is tactile in the emphatic sense. He had already discovered an allegory of this insight in Ernst's *Répétitions*, since in this image the conversion of distant space into the immediate space of tactility is carried out through the act and the tools of writing. While the church, the hot-air balloon, and the telegraph pole on the right as symbols of distance are contrasted with the monumental piece of chalk on the left, the schoolboys bring the distant space of opticality into the immediate space of tactility by seeming to press their writing hands to the sky. In his own writing, too, Benjamin enacted this turn away from an art that “begins at a distance of two meters from the body,” and he did so by explicitly dismissing painting, which he considered the quintessence of the obsolete ideal of aesthetic distance.

In the surrealism essay of 1929, Benjamin speaks pronouncedly against the painting of de Chirico and Ernst:

At the center of this world of things stands the most dreamed-about of their objects: the city of Paris itself. But only revolt completely exposes its Surrealist face (deserted streets in which whistles and shots dictate the outcome). And no face is surrealistic to the same degree as the true face of a city. No picture by de Chirico or Max Ernst can match the sharp elevations of the city's inner strongholds, which one must overrun and occupy in order to master their fate and—in their fate, in the fate of their masses—one's own.¹⁶

In the modern city, but not in modern painting, Benjamin sees the possibility of conceiving the future of the subject and that of the collective as a common future. This thesis will be developed further in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*. The famous text opposes the “contemplative” and “optical” perception that easel painting requires with the “distracted” and “tactile” perception that is offered to the masses in architecture and above all in cinema. As in the early notes for *The Arcades Project*, montage and tactility are again joined in

opposition to contemplation, albeit with another goal. In *The Work of Art*, Benjamin is concerned not with regaining contact to the past, or in laying the groundwork for an awakening out of it, but instead with the political consequences of the profound and irreversible transformation of the human sensorium through photography and film. Modern painting can only take part in this transformation inasmuch as it tends toward cinema. According to Benjamin, it has done so since cubism, and particularly radically in Dada: “Dadaism attempted to produce with the means of painting (or literature) the effects which the public today seeks in film.”¹⁷ However, because of its medial support, painting remains bound to the previous mode of contemplative seeing: “Let us compare the screen [Leinwand] on which film unfolds, with the canvas [Leinwand] of painting. The image on the film screen changes, whereas that on the canvas does not. The painting invites the viewer to contemplation; before it, he can give himself up to the train of associations. Before a film image, he cannot do so. No sooner has he seen it than it has already changed.”¹⁸ Painting also belongs to the past because it always preserves distance to the objects of its representation and reproduces them as wholes, while cinema intrudes into reality, as Benjamin illustrates with the famous contrast between painter and magician, on the one hand, and surgeon and filmmaker, on the other.¹⁹

Benjamin’s diagnosis of the obsolescence of painting is very well known up to this point. To an artist such as Ernst, who since the early 1920s committed his work to the ghostly return of painting, Benjamin concedes no future. With his decision not to go to the exhibition at the Galerie Flechtheim, and later with his repudiation of Ernst’s painting in the essay on surrealism, Benjamin made clear that he could no longer find in the works of this artist that which the print *Répétitions* had seemed to herald: pictures that were not “at a distance of two meters from the body.”

However, a six-page, paginated manuscript titled “Zum Kunstwerk im Zeitalter / Malerei und Graphik” (“On the Work of Art in the Age / Painting and the Graphic Arts”) from 1938–40, in which Benjamin recorded his thoughts toward a revision of the *Work of Art* essay,²⁰ makes his relationship to painting seem no longer so very polemical. In these notes—which have so far been ignored by art history and have interested Benjamin scholars in an editorial respect only—Benjamin comes back to his early texts “Painting and the Graphic Arts” and “Painting, or Signs and Marks,” whose main theses I briefly summarized in the

introduction: Paintings differ from graphic works because of their orientation and, moreover, paintings and graphic works are based on differing forms of production. A graphic work is horizontal and emphasizes its being as artifact, so clearly that each line is experienced as a placed line, and each between-space as paper. A painting is vertical and as a stained surface is also analogous to the human body and its marks.²¹ The mark is a sign incurred by the body, and painting is likewise a passive art according to its nature. In addition, as Benjamin's most important example, blushing, implies, this passivity can be described more specifically as becoming-seen. The paradigmatic case of blushing is, according to Benjamin, shame in the presence of mystery. He understands the flushing of the skin as the sign of a transfiguring collapse of the subject comparable to religious ecstasy.²²

In order to elucidate Benjamin's revision of these early speculations on painting, marks, and shame, I would first like briefly to examine the tenth footnote of the second edition of the *Work of Art* essay, which outlines a theory of originary mimesis. Art has its source in bodily mimesis, though from the beginning in a double aspect: "The mime presents his subject as a semblance. One could also say that he plays his subject. Thus we encounter the polarity informing mimesis. In mimesis, tightly interfolded like cotyledons, slumber the two aspects of art: semblance and play."²³ Mimesis as semblance always remains related to the human body and engenders auratic artworks, while mimesis as play leads away from the human body and is strengthened by the disintegration of the auratic in modernity: "that which is lost in the withering of semblance and the decay of aura in works of art is matched by a huge gain in [Spiel-Raum, literally 'space for play']."²⁴ Benjamin's lifelong interest in play, in gambling as well as in children's play, is related to his attempt to conceive of subjectivity as a formation of the material world. In play, bodies are joined with things; bodies become things, things become bodies. The gambler is as closely joined to the cards or dice as to his own hand; the child imitates people and things, both the teacher and a railway train. Film, which Benjamin also calls "Lichtspiel" (light-play), is not considered by Benjamin to be an example of illusion; rather, he considers it the most radical form of such a penetration or "innervation" of body and apparatus. The cinema audience experiences this "innervation" and at the same time can appropriate it as a new form of sensorium. The audience is not only made into a collective by film; in the medium of film, it also creates itself as a collective. Such

a relationship that is both passive and active can be termed playful. Therefore, film offers the masses a “space for play” in which the masses discover collective perception and simultaneously recognize it as their own.²⁵

In the notes from 1938–40 titled “On the Work of Art in the Age / Painting and the Graphic Arts,” the question becomes to what extent the old visual arts had already contributed, or could continue to contribute, to expanding the “space for play.” Beginning with the distinction between cult and exhibition value, Benjamin first establishes that the easel painting is a mobile object that has no specific location. But, he continues, the mobility of the painting proves limited when it is compared with the graphic work. (Here by “graphic work,” he means modern advertising and print media in addition to drawing and printing.) According to Benjamin’s fundamental distinction, the painting lacks the mobility of the graphic work because it is oriented vertically and thus addresses itself to human beings as an entity that stands erect. However, the graphic work is horizontal and thus is related not to the verticality of the gaze but to the horizontal plane of locomotion. This also distinguishes its mobility from that of the painting. The easel painting is mobile because its support has no fixed location. This is also the case for the graphic work. But the graphic work is characterized by a mode of representation that takes into account the movement of the viewer, or even initiates and prepares the way for this movement. In the graphic work, the picture proves to be a field divided into various precincts that indicate possibilities of movement, as in the magic circle or the drawing on the ground in the children’s game “heaven and hell.”²⁶ In this example, the term *Spiel-Raum* achieves its concrete basis. The graphic work opens up a “space for play” since it cartographizes the possibilities of future action. With this conception of graphic work as cartography and cartography as preparing the way for play and movement, Benjamin performs a crucial modification of his theory of 1917.

The thoughts that Benjamin devotes to painting in these late notes lead from the easel painting back to a primal form of painting that in turn is understood as a mark. As a mark that appears and passes away, this originary painting is likewise mobile, but in a different way from the easel painting or the graphic work. The easel painting is mobile because its support is not bound to any fixed location, and the graphic work is mobile because it marks out a “space for play” for its users. The originary painting is mobile because its signs appear suddenly and, like a blush of shame, also pass away again; however, the signs of origi-

nary painting do not exclusively arise from depths. More explicitly than in 1917, Benjamin states that not only blushing but also “the writing in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar” belong to the category of the mark. “The mark in the most exact sense of the word” is “a colored configuration that appears on the wall (emerges from it or is cast upon it).”²⁷ In concluding, he returns to the diagnosis developed in the *Work of Art* essay, that the body has lost its meaning as the ground of image production and has been replaced by a space for play in which body and apparatus are interconnected. “From this perspective of the philosophy of history, the contemporary crisis of painting would amount to transformations that imply the atrophy of the medium of painting (*Malerei*), the medium in which the mark (*Mal*) is at home.”²⁸

The manuscript “On the Work of Art in the Age / Painting and the Graphic Arts” is clear evidence that Benjamin continued until the end to meditate intensively on the nature and history of painting. In the place of clear oppositions such as that between immobile canvas and mobile film image or between optical/contemplative painting, on the one hand, and tactile/attacking montage, on the other, now the historical dialectic that was already outlined in the tenth footnote of the second edition is developed in the area of visual art. It begins with the antithesis of painting as mark and graphic work as map. As mark, painting belongs with bodily mimesis as semblance. It addresses its viewer with the obtrusiveness of a scar or blush. With the mobile easel painting, painting detached itself from this origin in the human body. Simultaneously, play gains significance. Its medium is the graphic work. The graphic work gives the human body access to a “space for play,” in that it sets the body in motion and regulates its movements. From this point of view, the magic circle or the drawing on the ground in the game “heaven and hell” are the first apparatuses with which the human body is joined.

To return to Max Ernst, these thoughts read like an art-critical commentary on his painting after 1925. Grattage can be understood as an attempt once more to conceive of painting as a medium of the mark (fig. 60). As opposed to the majority of post-impressionist paintings, which emphasized the application of paint in order to make the picture transparent to its own material production, the grattages were intended to be viewed as if their marks and signifying motifs had risen from the depths of the material layers of paint. During this time, Ernst also worked with pieces of rope that he first dipped in paint and then threw

at a canvas strewn with sand. This procedure lends itself to comparison with Benjamin's conception of the mark as a projection on the wall. In the early text "Visions of Half-Sleep," Ernst's assertion that his painting is grounded in becoming seen (see chapter 3) brings him yet closer to Benjamin's conception of painting as an art that is passive according to its nature. Also, Ernst's turn away from grattage in *Europe after the Rain* from 1933 (see chapter 5) can be elucidated with reference to Benjamin's late thoughts on painting and graphic works. According to Benjamin in 1938, the graphic work is a mode of representation that indicates our future movements in space: "The graphic work depicts the world in such a way that the human may traverse it. Its viewer's eye hurries ahead of his foot. No transition and no mediation leads from the easel painting to a map."²⁹ Benjamin's opposition of paintings and maps corresponds exactly to the alternatives with which Ernst also found himself confronted in 1933 when he produced *Europe after the Rain*, a picture in opposition to his own grattages. The painter who attempted to lead painting back to the mark took the opposing position in this one work and created a map that would guide its users in their exploration of post-revolutionary Europe.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 “dessins imprimés, dessins de réclames, images de dictionnaire, images populaires, images de journaux.”
- 2 “Chacun de ces tableaux témoigne d’une découverte technique différente.”
- 3 “une sorte de collage intellectuel.” Louis Aragon, “Max Ernst, peintre des illusions,” in *Les Collages* (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 25, 28, 27.
- 4 “faculté merveilleuse.”
- 5 “Doesn’t such an ability make the person who possesses it better than a poet, since poets do not need to be aware of their visions and, in any case, maintain strictly Platonic relations with them?” André Breton, *The Lost Steps*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 61.
- 6 Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings* (New York: Schultz, 1948), 26–29. Max Ernst, exhibition catalog (Zurich: Kunsthaus Zurich, 1962), I–X. A persuasive analysis of Ernst’s autobiographical writing, which I unfortunately overlooked while preparing the German edition of this book, is Cornelis de Boer, “Selbstzitat Als Selbstporträt in Max Ernsts Notes Pour Une Biographie: Die Identität des Künstlers als Collage,” in *Instrument Zitat: Über den literarhistorischen und institutionellen Nutzen von Zitaten und Zitieren*, ed. Klaus Beekmann and Ralf Grüttemeier, *Avant-Garde Critical Studies* 13 (2000): 81–107.
- 7 Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 14.
- 8 Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 256.
- 9 Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 17.
- 10 Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen: Inventar und Widerspruch* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1974); Dirk Teuber, “Max Ernsts Lehrmittel,” in *Max Ernst in Köln: Die rheinische Kunstszene bis 1922*, exhibition catalog, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1980), 206–21; Jürgen Pech, “Mimesis und Modifikation: Fotografische Porträts und ihre Verwendung im Werk von Max Ernst,” in *Max Ernst: Das Rendezvous der Freunde*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 1991), 241–69; Ludger Derenthal, “Mitteilungen über Flugzeuge, Engel und den Weltkrieg: Zu den Photocollagen der Dadazeit von Max Ernst,” in *Im Blickfeld: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle* 2 (1994): 41–60.
- 11 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
- 12 Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 157–92.
- 13 Richard Schiff, “Representation, Copying, and the Technique of Originality,” *New Literary History* 15, no. 2, “Interrelation of Interpretation and Creation” (Winter 1984): 333–63.
- 14 Peter Bürger emphasizes this aspect in his theory of the avant-garde, in that he views the avant-garde as an attack on the organic artwork. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 15 Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*.
- 16 See further James Elkins, review of *Compulsive Beauty*, by Hal Foster, *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 546–48.

- 17 Here, I am following Brigid Doherty's concise critique of the exhibition at the Met curated by Werner Spies. Doherty, "Max Ernst: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York," *Artforum* (September 2005). Werner Spies and Sabine Rewald, eds., *Max Ernst: A Retrospective* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). For a critical engagement with Doherty's text, one of the best on Ernst, see the afterword. Brigid Doherty, "Max Ernst: A Retrospective," *Artforum* (September 2005): 295–97, 332, 347.
- 18 Clement Greenberg, "Collage," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 70–83; Christine Poggi, "Frames of Reference: Table and Tableau in Picasso's Collages and Constructions," *Art Journal* 47, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 311–22; Yve-Alain Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lesson," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 65–97; Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. William Rubin and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 169–208; Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998).
- 19 Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
- 20 Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*; another important investigation into the function of painting in the context of avant-gardism is offered by George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- 21 Paul Klee, "Die Ausstellung des Modernen Bundes im Kunsthaus Zürich" (1912), in *Paul Klee: Kunst-Lehre*, ed. Günther Regel (Leipzig: P. Reclam, 1987), 52ff.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 23 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 219–23; Benjamin, "Letter to Gershom Scholem, 22 October 1917," in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 97–102; Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923*, vol. 2, ed. Karlfried Gründer et al. (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000), 30–34. The most recent and most comprehensive discussion of Benjamin's early art theory is found in Annie Borneuf, "'Radically Uncolorful Painting': Walter Benjamin and the Problem of Cubism," *Grey Room* 39 (Spring 2010): 74–93.
- 24 Yve-Alain Bois, "Piet Mondrian, New York City," in *Painting as Model*, 178–79, 308. For further discussion of these texts, see David E. Wellbery, "Benjamin's Theory of the Lyric," in *Benjamin's Ground: New Readings of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Rainer Nägele (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 54–57; Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Color of Experience* (London: Routledge, 1998), 85–89; Charles W. Haxthausen, "Reproduction/Repetition: Walter Benjamin/Carl Einstein," *October* 107 (Winter 2004): 64–65; Heinz Brüggemann, *Walter Benjamin über Spiel, Farbe und Phantasie* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2007), 143–53; and Brigid Doherty, "Painting and Graphics," in Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, 195–217.
- 25 The connection here is an etymological one. The Middle High German *Mal* had the sense "stain, mark, sign, sin, or shame." Modern usage includes *Muttermal* (birthmark) and *Wundmal* (scar), as well as *Schandmal* (stigma or blemish) and *Kainsmal* (mark of Cain). The verb *malen*, in Modern German meaning "to paint," formerly had the sense "to apply marks or signs."—Trans.
- 26 The concept of disanalogy refers in this context to Whitney Davis's thesis that Freud chose his metaphors in part specifically to illuminate the metaphorized entity through dissimilarities.

Davis, *Drawing the Dream of the Wolves: Homosexuality, Interpretation, and Freud's "Wolf Man"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 85.

CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Max Ernst, "Souvenirs rhénans," *L'Œil* 16 (April 1956): 9ff.
- 2 Werner Spies and Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975), no. 349, see also nos. 350, 372.
- 3 "Ein hoffnungsvoller junger Mann gewöhnt sich leicht das Malen an." Jürgen Pech, "Mimesis und Modifikation: Fotografische Porträts und ihre Verwendung im Werk von Max Ernst," in *Max Ernst: Das Rendezvous der Freunde*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 1991), 241ff.
- 4 Here, I am following Richard Shiff's fundamental examinations, especially "Performing an Appearance: On the Surface of Abstract Expressionism," in *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*, ed. Michael Auping (New York: H. N. Abrams in association with Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1987), 94–123; and Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality: The Politics of Touch," in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129–80. See also Rosalind Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. William Rubin and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992). On Ernst's impressionist early phase, see Martina Ewers-Schultz, *Die französischen Grundlagen des "Rheinischen Expressionismus," 1905–1914: Stellenwert und Bedeutung der französischen Kunst in Deutschland und ihre Rezeption der Bonner Ausstellungsgemeinschaft von 1913* (Münster: Lit, 1996), 118ff., 157–63.
- 5 "Mais l'abstraction ne joue pas simplement les moyens de l'art contre leur subordination à l'imitation de la nature. Au contraire, en opposant l'apparence (naturelle) des objets à l'essence de la nature, elle vise à retrouver cette dernière." (But abstraction is not simply art's means of opposing its subordination to the imitation of nature. On the contrary: by opposing the (natural) appearance of the object to the essence of nature, it aims to rediscover the latter.) Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *L'Art de la tache: Introduction à la Nouvelle méthode d'Alexandre Cozens* (Montréal: Éditions du Limon, 1990), 397.
- 6 Gérard Genette, *Mimologics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
- 7 On the mediation of perception and the act of painting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Shiff, "Performing an Appearance" and "Cézanne's Physicality"; also see Margaret Olin, "Validation by Touch in Kandinsky's Early Abstract Art," *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 1 (Autumn 1989): 144–72.
- 8 Ernst, "Souvenirs rhénans," 11.
- 9 "Ich gab mich dem Naturstudium hin, lagerte während unsagbar langen Zeiten unbeweglich auf einem Tisch und versuchte, wie ein Berg, tief langsam, unendlich langsam, zu träumen." Hans Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum: Erinnerungen und Dichtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954* (Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 1955), 97.
- 10 The best analysis of Arp's art is given by Stefanie Poley, *Hans Arp: Die Formensprache im plastischen Werk* (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1978); in addition, there is Harriet Watts, *Chance: A Perspective on Dada* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980); Jane Hancock, "Die Philosophie in Arps Formensprache," in *Arp, 1886–1966*, exhibition catalog (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1986), 58–73; Margherita Andreotti, *Early Sculpture of Jean Arp* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989); Monika Schröter, "Die weibliche Formkraft in Hans Arps ästhetischem Konzept," in *Die Weibliche und die männliche Linie: Das imaginäre Geschlecht der modernen Kunst von Klimt bis Mondrian* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1993); and Uwe Schramm, *Raubegriff bei Hans Arp* (Münster: Lit, 1995).

- 11 Fundamental works on the seeing of resemblances include Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1989), 154–61; H. W. Janson, “The ‘Image Made by Chance’ in Renaissance Thought,” in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 254–66; Hubert Damisch, *Théorie du nuage* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974); Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Lebensztejn, *L’Art de la tache*; Christa Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose vom Mythos zum Prozessdenken: Ovid-Rezeption, surrealistische Ästhetik, Verwandlungsthematik der Nachkriegskunst* (Weinheim: VCH, 1992); James Elkins, *Why Are Our Pictures Puzzles? On the Modern Origins of Pictorial Complexity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 177–230; and Dario Gamboni, “‘Fabrications of Accidents’: Factura and Chance in Nineteenth-Century Art,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 36 (1999): 205–25. Unfortunately, I am no longer able to incorporate Dario Gamboni’s important study on imaginative seeing in modernism (*Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* [London: Reaktion, 2002]).
- 12 On the deficit of freedom and innovation in the history of the imitation of nature, see Hans Blumenberg, “Nachahmung der Natur—Zur Vorgeschichte des schöpferischen Menschen,” in *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben* (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1981), 274.
- 13 “In Ascona zeichnete ich mit Pinsel und Tusche abgebrochene Äste, Wurzeln, Gräser, Steine, die der See an den Strand gespült hatte. Diese Formen vereinfachte ich und vereinigte ihr Wesen in bewegten Ovalen, Sinnbildern der ewigen Verwandlung und des Werdens der Körper.” Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, 12.
- 14 In general, on the genre of the modernist crypto-portrait, see Edith Futscher, *Diesseits der Fassade: Kryptoportraits der Moderne zwischen Bildnis und Stillleben* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 2001); on other crypto- and friendship portraits by Max Ernst, see Ludger Derenthal, “Max Ernst: Trois tableaux d’amitié,” *Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne* 31 (1990): 73–110.
- 15 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick, ed. Ritchie Robertson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 208–9.
- 16 Freud, “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12, ed. James Strachey (Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing, www.pep-web.org), 222. See also Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 1:363.
- 17 Dirk Teuber, “Max Ernsts Lehrmittel,” in *Max Ernst in Köln: Die rheinische Kunstszene bis 1922*, exhibition catalog, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1980), 206–40; Gerd Bauer, “Max Ernst und der Kölner Lehrmittelkatalog,” *Jahresring 19* (1988/89): 205–24.
- 18 On the diagram from a semiological perspective, see Jean-Gérard Lapacherie, “De la grammatextualité,” *Poétique* 59 (1985): 283–94.
- 19 Fehlleistung, literally “faulty performance,” commonly “Freudian slip.” The term “parapraxis” has been criticized as unwieldy, incomprehensible, and overly clinical. Nevertheless, unlike “slip,” “parapraxis” serves to retain the positive sense of *Leistung*: something is being performed, although it runs counter to the performer’s conscious intention. Because of the centrality of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* throughout this book, I prefer in general to use Strachey’s terminology.—Trans.
- 20 See Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 82–91; Shiff, “Cézanne’s Physicality”; Krauss, “The Motivation of the Sign,” 266–71; Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 58–89; Wolfram Pichler, “Schminke/Leinwand/Caravaggio/Goya” (Ph.D. diss., Univer-

- sity of Vienna, 1999), 107–29. Leo Steinberg's famous lecture, "Picasso's Intelligence," which is fundamental in this context, has unfortunately still not been published.
- 21 William Camfield, *Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism*, exhibition catalog (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1993), 52ff.
 - 22 William Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life, and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art, New Women, and Francis Picabia's Neurasthenic Cure," in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed. Peter Galison et al. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 145–80.
 - 23 "Ich lernte Francis Picabia 1917 anlässlich seines Besuches in Zürich kennen. Er kam als Abgesandter der amerikanischen Dadaisten, um seine Kollegen in Zürich zu begrüßen. Tristan Tzara und ich begaben uns, neugierig und bewegt, in sein Hotel. Wir fanden ihn beschäftigt beim Sezieren eines Weckers. Ich mußte unwillkürlich an die Anatomie Rembrandts im Kunstmuseum von Amsterdam denken. Wahrlich, wir hatten einen großen Schritt vorwärts in das Reich der Abstraktion getan. Erbarmungslos zerlegte er seinen Wecker bis auf die Uhrfeder, die er triumphierend extrahierte. Für einen kurzen Augenblick unterbrach er seine Arbeit, um uns zu begrüßen. Doch ohne viel Zeit zu verlieren, versah er ein weißes Papier mit den Abdrucken der Rädchen, Federn, Zeiger und anderen geheimen Teilchen der Uhr. Eifrig schlug er diese Dinge vom Stempelkissen auf das Papier wie ein pflichteifriger Postbeamter, verband diese Stempel miteinander durch Linien. . . ." Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, 63. Using the example of Picabia's Parisian works, in *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), George Baker has recently called attention to the reflexive aspect of Dadaist negation.
 - 24 The German *Unterlage* means "base" or "substratum" as well as, more generally, something that is laid underneath something else.—Trans.
 - 25 Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen: Inventar und Widerspruch* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1974), 41ff.
 - 26 Since, in 1919, Duchamp's readymades were only known to a few people, predominantly American friends, the question is raised of how Max Ernst learned about this work. It was probably through Hans Arp, who had learned about it from Picabia. The exhaustive caption of fig. 8 suggests that Picabia had also told his Central European friends about Duchamp's *Large Glass*. It is well known that in the bachelor machine, illuminating gas circulates, solidifies, and dissipates in little spangles. In Ernst's machine, gas freezes, making little numbers grow: "la canalisation de gaz frigorifié fait pousser de petits numéros crépitants / le cœur comprimé s'est enfui à temps / nous nous appuyons contre le laurier delphique" (the canalization of refrigerated gas makes little sputtering numbers grow / the compressed heart has escaped in time / we lean against the delphic laurel). Incidentally, Evan Maurer has observed that a title from *Fiat Modes*, *bräutliche mattung* (bridal matting), alludes to *Large Glass*. Maurer, "Images of Dream and Desire: The Prints and Collage Novels of Max Ernst," in *Max Ernst: Beyond Surrealism*, exhibition catalog, ed. Robert Rainwater (New York: New York Public Library, 1986), 42; on artists' interest in illuminating gas and frozen gas, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
 - 27 Lucy Lippard, "Dada into Surrealism: Notes on Max Ernst as Proto-Surrealist," *Artforum* (September 1966): 13; Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 35ff.; Rosalind Krauss, "Max Ernst: Speculations Provoked by an Exhibition," *Artforum* 11 (May 1973): 37–40; Helmut R. Leppien, "Ein Besuch bei Goltz und die Folgen," in *Max Ernst in Köln: Die rheinische Kunstszene bis 1922*, exhibition catalog, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1980), 126–27; Maurer, "Im-

- ages of Dream and Desire,” 41–45; Alfred M. Fischer, “‘Es werde Mode, die Kunst vergehe’: ‘Zu Fiat modes perat ars’ von Max Ernst,” in *Max Ernst: Druckgraphische Werke und illustrierte Bücher*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 1990), 27–40; Jürgen Pech, “Was der Taucher vor dem Sprung nicht wissen kann: Giorgio de Chirico und Max Ernst,” in Arnold Böcklin, *Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst: Eine Reise ins Ungewisse*, exhibition catalog, ed. Guido Magnaguago and Juri Steiner (Bern: Zürich Kunsthhaus, 1998), 289–330.
- 28 Also titled *allways the best man wins*.
- 29 Louis Aragon, “Max Ernst, peintre des illusions,” in *Les Collages* (Paris: Hermann, 1993).
- 30 On Ernst’s first Paris exhibition, see Ludger Derenthal, “Eine surrealistische Révélation: Die erste Max Ernst-Ausstellung in Paris,” in *Max Ernst: Das Rendezvous der Freunde*, 55–74.
- 31 Krauss, “Max Ernst: Speculations Provoked by an Exhibition.”
- 32 On this symptomology of negated illusionism, see Ralph Ubl, “Das Gemälde als medialer Schwellenraum: André Breton, Giorgio de Chirico und der Gebrauch toter Bilder,” in *Inszenierungen in Bild und Schrift*, ed. Gerhard Neumann and Claudia Öhlschläger (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2004), 125–46; Ubl, “Giorgio de Chirico: Exkarnation und Filiation der Malerei,” in *Ikonologie des Zwischenraums: Der Schleier als Medium und Metapher*, ed. Johannes Endres, Barbara Wittmann, and Gerhard Wolf (München: Fink, 2005), 385–416.
- 33 Louis Aragon, “La peinture au défi” (1930), in *Les Collages*, 54.
- 34 Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 57.
- 35 “Zapfenmuster.” The German *Zapfen* means “cone”; *Eiszapfen* (literally “ice-cone”) means “icicle.” So the cone shapes of the wallpaper pattern are related to the icicles of the work’s title, *Eislandschaften, Eiszapfen und Gesteinsarten des weiblichen Körpers* (*Frozen Landscapes, Icicles and Minerals Types of the Female Body*).—Trans.
- 36 Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Ruas (London: Continuum 2004), 95ff.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 38 Shiff, “Cézanne’s Physicality,”; Shiff, “Picasso’s Touch,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1990): 39–47.
- 39 The drawing was published in *Valori plastici* (April/May 1919) and became known to Ernst in September of that year. Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 35ff.; Leppien, “Ein Besuch bei Goltz,” 126ff.
- 40 Max Ernst, who in fact painted the naturalistic pear in figure 20, surely intended to deceive the viewer into taking the fruit for a cut-and-pasted readymade—and he did successfully fool the authors of the catalogue raisonnée. See Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 773. Moving from the history of artistic procedure under examination here to a microhistory, a specific context can be reconstructed for Ernst’s watercolor imitation of a collaged pear. Ernst maintained a particularly close relationship with Paul and Gala Éluard, who in turn knew de Chirico well enough to visit him in Rome. De Chirico even thought that the Éluards supported his return to the old masters, and wrote Gala a letter (February 10, 1924) in which he shared with her his newest tempera recipe: “Le tout melangé ensemble forme une émulsion parfaite. Avec cette émulsion on broie les couleurs et on peint. On obtient une matière très belle, précieuse et lumineuse; conseillez-la à M. Max Ernst.” (The whole thing mixed together forms a perfect emulsion. You crush the colors and paint with this emulsion. A beautiful material is obtained, exquisite and luminous; recommend it to M. Max Ernst.) Joel de Sanna, “Giorgio de Chirico: Letters to André and Simone Breton, to Gala and Paul Éluard, Paul Éluard—J. T. Soby Correspondence,” *Metafisica*, nos. 1/2 (2002), 62–160. This request to pass the recipe along to Ernst (whom de Chirico did not know personally) is based on a misunderstanding: the sur-

realist painters did indeed experiment with different techniques (Ernst with collage, frottage, grattage, tracing, and many others), but the goal of these experiments was specifically to get away from the traditional artistic devices and techniques that de Chirico believed he had rediscovered. When Ernst paints a pear as naturalistically as possible in order to suggest to us that it was cut and pasted from an illustrated broadside, he is subtly leading the yearning for the old masters astray: because it stands in front of a frottage and a diagram, the painted fruit projects those features that make it most resemble a collaged fruit. It is well painted, and yet it looks as if it had been cut out and pasted in.

- 41 Richard Wollheim, *Objekte der Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 192–210; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image: Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1990).
- 42 The prefix *zer-* is used to denote that the action of a verb is destructive to the object. Etymologically related to *zwei* (two), it carries the sense of breaking something into pieces. I use “seeing apart” as in “breaking apart,” “tearing apart,” but also because the object is seen apart from its original context.—Trans.
- 43 Aragon, “Max Ernst, peintre des illusions,” 25 ff.; Aragon, “La peinture au défi,” 53 ff.
- 44 A *Vexierbild* (literally “vexing picture”) is a visual puzzle that conceals two distinct images within one set of contours, which, through a trick of perception, can be reversed.—Trans.
- 45 A semiologic reading for these non-metamorphic transitions and double meanings can be found in Yve-Alain Bois, “Kahnweiler’s Lesson,” in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); and Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998).
- 46 A frottage published in *Histoire naturelle* in 1926, with the title *L'idole* (The Idol) (Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 808) may relate the topos of the depth of the imagination explicitly to de Chirico and thus again bring attention to Ernst’s separation from de Chirico’s art. Grapes can be considered the idol of painting—ever since Zeuxis’ masterpiece, they have stood for the deceptive power of representation. In the frottage, they are presented as a fossil imprint. With these subterranean grapes, Ernst is evidently alluding to de Chirico’s text “Zeusi l’esploratore” (“Zeuxis the Explorer”), published in 1918 in *Valori plastici*. The first sentence ends with “i nuovi Zeusi partono soli alla scoperta delle curiosità che s’annidano come talpe su per tutta la crosta del globo terracqueo” (the new Zeuxi leave on their own to explore the curiosities which lodge themselves, like moles, beneath the carapace of the earth). The discoveries that the new Zeuxi make underground bring to light a world full of eyes: “Bisogna scoprire l’occhio in ogni cosa.” (We have to discover the eye in every object.) Eyes are one of the most frequently occurring motifs in Ernst’s frottages. It is likely no accident that for an underlay, Ernst chose the rough surface of an oil painting (for the grapes and the dark outer strips) and the fabric from a canvas (for the central rectangle): in the media of traditional painting are concealed unknown, “subterranean” pictorial possibilities, which the subversive workings of the surrealist imagination make manifest.
- 47 See Werner Spies, *Frottages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968); William S. Rubin, *Dada und Surrealismus* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1972); Hans Holländer, “Ars inveniendi et investigandi: Zur surrealistischen Methode,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 32 (1970): 9–20; Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose*, 155–67; Andreas Vowinckel, *Surrealismus und Kunst: Studien zu Ideengeschichte und Bedeutungswandel des Surrealismus vor Gründung der surrealistischen Bewegung und zu Begriff, Methode und Ikonographie des Surrealismus in der Kunst 1919 bis 1925* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1989), 270 ff.; Elizabeth Legge, “Zeuxis’s Grapes, Novalis’s Fossils, Freud’s Flowers: Max Ernst’s Natural History,” *Art History* 16 (1993): 147–72; Ralf Konersmann, “Max Ernst und die Idee der Naturgeschichte,” in *Die*

- Erfindung der Natur: Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Wols und das surreale Universum*, exhibition catalog, ed. Karin Orchard and Jörg Zimmermann (Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 1994), 159–67.
- 48 Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 124.
- 49 See the observations of Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose*, 158; Ludger Derenthal and Jürgen Pech, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Françaises, Casterman, 1992), 105.
- 50 See Wollheim, *Objekte der Kunst*, 192–210, for his critique of Gombrich (*Art and Illusion*, 5).
- 51 Schachtelhalm, literally “box rush.” The scouring rush (*Equisetum*) is the last surviving genus of the class *Equisetopsida*, which was prevalent in late Paleozoic forests, where some grew as tall as large trees.—Trans.
- 52 The fundamental insight formulated by Werner Hofmann in his classic essay “*Ars Combinatoria*,” *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 21 (1976): 7–30—that diagram and blot are not necessarily contrary, but occur in many forms of convergence and hybridization—underlies these observations. Also, the integration of the cut, as Werner Spies first presented it (*Max Ernst Collagen*, 93), is prepared for in the photo- and woodcut collages.
- 53 “Im Simulakrum gewinnt die Darstellung, die in der Mimesis die Transparenz auf einen ideellen Tiefenraum ist, eine eigene Dichte; das Tote (bzw. Abwesende) wird lebendig, erlangt den Status einer Präsenz, ohne jedoch seinen irrealen Charakter gänzlich abzustreifen. Die Mimesis trennt die Aktualität des Betrachters von der Virtualität des Betrachteten durch die durchsichtige, aber nichtsdestoweniger rigoros unterscheidende Grenze des Darstellungsmediums. Im Simulakrum hingegen verdichtet sich diese Grenze zu einer aufdringlichen Präsenz, die weder bloß wirklich noch bloß unwirklich (ideell) ist, zu einer Wirklichkeit der Darstellung, die einen unauflöslich ambigen, oft gespensterhaften Charakter aufweist.” David Wellbery, “Verzauberung: Das Simulakrum in der romantischen Lyrik,” in *Mimesis und Simulation*, ed. Andreas Kablitz and Gerhard Neumann (Freiburg: Rombach, 1998), 452.
- 54 “*Trompe l’oeil*, by suppressing the distance between model and copy, by suspending the referential relation, traps the perceiving eye in what I shall call essence-appearance, in apparition, and it delivers the body-eye over to fascination with the double, to stupefaction; by the same token, the effect is not one of contemplation and theory, a return to the serene and peaceful truth of representation, the truth of the thing absent from the real—hence the reality effect of all representation—but of surreality, an impure blend of anguish and shock: the effect of presence.” Louis Marin, “Representation and Simulacrum,” in *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 316.
- 55 On the anachronism of the imprint in general, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *L’Empreinte*, exhibition catalog (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1995).
- 56 “In 1870 Duret stated that Manet brings back from the vision he casts on things an impression truly his own. This mobile eye then reflects back to record an image on its own light-sensitive and impressionable surface. Such an eye tracks and traces itself, seeing. Its vision is an image of its own individuality. Now, in the act of painting, the hand substitutes for this eye. It traces out a path of visible form as if it were an eye cast onto a visual field. According to the impressionist model, the hand responds immediately to the eye and shares all its idiosyncrasies (the body, including hand and eye, must have organic integrity). Just as the eye records its own vision, so the hand traces itself, tracing; indexically, it reveals its own character. Such an act of painting resolves the problem [. . .] of self-representation by turning outward toward nature, allowing nature to activate an impression that can only be one’s own. The subject knows itself, indexes itself, only through a resisting object to which eye and hand respond.” Shiff, “Performing an Appearance,” 108.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Werner Spies, *Max Ernst, Loplop: The Artist in the Third Person* (New York: G. Braziller, 1983).
- 2 Here, I am following the accounts of Laurent Jenny, *La parole singulière* (Paris: Belin, 1990); and Vincent Kaufmann, *Poétique des groupes littéraires (Avantgardes 1920–1970)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970).
- 3 Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), *Poésies and Complete Miscellanea*, trans. Alexis Lykiard (London: Allison & Busby, 1978), 75.
- 4 André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 26, 33.
- 5 Besides the initial work, *The Magnetic Fields (Les Champs magnétiques)* (1919), these include the texts dictated by Robert Desnos while half asleep during the fall of 1922; Breton's collection *Soluble Fish (Poisson soluble)*, published in 1924; Michel Leiris's volume *Simulacrum (Simulacre)*; several dozen shorter attempts by Aragon, Morise, Artaud, Leiris, and others, which were published in the columns of *La Révolution surréaliste*; and finally in 1930, Breton and Éluard's *Immaculate Conception (L'Immaculée conception)*. See Claudio Abastado, "Écriture automatique et instance du sujet," *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 184 (1981): 59–75; Michel Murat, "Jeux de l'automatisme," in *Une pelle au vent dans les sables du rêve: Les écritures automatiques*, ed. Michel Murat and Marie-Paul Berranger (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1992), 15–25; Michel Murat, "Les Lieux communs de l'écriture automatique," *Littérature moderne* 1 (1988): 123–35; Marie-Paul Berranger, "Poisson soluble ou Les Mains vierges dans le petite niche à fond bleu du travail," in *Une Pelle au vent*, ed. Murat and Berranger, 93–111; and Jenny, *La parole singulière*.
- 6 Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 77–172.
- 7 "finalité communautaire"; Kaufmann, *Poétique des groupes littéraires*.
- 8 Werner Spies and Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975), nos. 564ff. The suggested date "ca. 1923," in light of the following entry from the logbook at surrealist headquarters, should be adjusted to 1924. Paule Thévenin, ed., *Bureau de recherches surréalistes: Cahier de la permanence octobre 1924–avril 1925* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 29: "Mercredi 22 octobre 1924. Permanence: Simone [Breton] J. A. Boiffard [. . .] 5¾ Max Ernst apporte un dessin fait selon la méthode surréaliste sur un rouleau étroit et très long qui se déroule. Il fait remarquer l'abrutissement progressif." (Wednesday, October 22, 1924. On duty: Simone [Breton] J. A. Boiffard [. . .] 5¾ Max Ernst brings in a drawing, made according to the surrealist method, on a narrow, very long, unrolling scroll. He points out the increasing stupefaction.) In general, on Ernst's artistic crisis shortly after the publication of Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*, see Dawn Ades, "Between Dada and Surrealism: Painting in the Mouvement Flou," in *In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism*, ed. Terry Ann R. Neff, exhibition catalog (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago), 23ff.
- 9 Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen: Inventar und Widerspruch* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1974), 114–24.
- 10 Rosalind Krauss, "Max Ernst: Speculations Provoked by an Exhibition," *Artforum* 11 (May 1973): 37–40.
- 11 There is a rich body of literature concerning this discussion, in particular Robert Desnos, "Surréalisme," *Cahiers d'Art* 1 (1926): 210–13; Rosalind Krauss, "Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 196–209; Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Frottage* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1968); Evan Maurer, "Images of Dream and Desire: The Prints and Collage Novels of Max Ernst," in *Max Ernst: Be-*

yond Surrealism, exhibition catalog, ed. Robert Rainwater (New York: New York Public Library, 1986), 55–62; Werner Spies, *Loplop—Die Selbstdarstellung des Künstlers* (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1982); Jennifer Mundy, “Surrealism and Painting: Describing the Imaginary,” *Art History* 10 (1987): 123–35; Andreas Vowinkel, *Surrealismus und Kunst: Studien zu Ideengeschichte und Bedeutungswandel des Surrealismus vor Gründung der surrealistischen Bewegung und zu Begriff, Methode und Ikonographie des Surrealismus in der Kunst 1919 bis 1925* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1989), 33ff., 310–16; Norbert Bandier, *Sociologie du Surréalisme* (Paris: La Dispute, 1999); Ralph Ubl, “Das Gemälde als medialer Schwellenraum: André Breton, Giorgio de Chirico und der Gebrauch toter Bilder,” in *Inszenierungen in Bild und Schrift*, ed. Gerhard Neumann and Claudia Öhlschläger (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2004).

- 12 In the second issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1925, p. 2), Breton complains about the salability of painting, which makes it useless for the revolutionary ethic of surrealism: “Est-il juste, par exemple, qu’à talent égal, les peintres s’enrichissent sur le sol même où les poètes pourraient mendier?” (Is it right, for example, that with equal talent, painters thrive in the same soil where poets would have to beg?) Despite his unbridled iconophilia, this injustice would always hamper Breton’s relations with painting. On May 18, 1926, Breton and Aragon launched a protest against Ernst and Miró’s collaboration with the Russian ballet. The painters’ names were cleared in the next issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, through the intervention of Paul Éluard.
- 13 “On one hand, in automatic writing, it is not, strictly speaking, the word that becomes free; rather, the word and my freedom are now no more than one. I slide into the word, it keeps my imprint, and it is my imprinted reality; it adheres to my non-adherence. But on another side, this freedom of words means that words become free for themselves: they no longer depend exclusively on things that they express, they act on their own account, they play, and as Breton says, ‘they make love.’” Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 88.
- 14 “With a pencil and a white sheet of paper to hand, I could easily trace their outlines. Here again it is not a matter of drawing, but simply of tracing.” Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, 21.
- 15 *La Révolution surréaliste* 1 (December 1, 1924): 26–27. That doubts about the authentic and direct expression of the unconscious are openly raised in the discussion of visual art per se can be attributed to a poetological difficulty considered to be the unique deficiency of visual art: the insufficient plasticity and material resistance of its medium. In the third issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (April 15, 1925, p. 27), Pierre Naville poses the rhetorical question, “Comment se fait-il que ce qu’on nomme la littérature s’alimente presque uniquement de l’amour, et que les mots trouvent si facilement leur compte dans cet abandon, tandis que les arts plastiques en sont sevrés, ou qu’il n’y transparait que voilé d’une façon très ambiguë?” (How is it that what we call “literature” feeds almost exclusively on love, and that words so easily get their due in this abandonment, whereas the visual arts have been weaned of love, or it does not show through in them except when veiled in ambiguity?) As we have seen, the problem of transparency is no less pressing in the case of poetry. However, it seems as if this problem is explicitly articulated in programmatic texts on visual art, whereas in poetic texts, its effect is only subliminal, eliciting compensation strategies and compelling the radicalization that culminates in the assumption of a totally mortified language as the precondition for its redemption. The discussion surrounding the possibility of a surrealist painting brings to light what the surrealist program as a rule suppressed, though its metaphors were animated by it: the importance of the artistic profession, which is positioned between psychic automatism and its artistic expression. On

- the sociological aspects of the relationship between surrealist poets and artists, see Bandier, *Sociologie du Surréalisme*.
- 16 “Les formes et les couleurs se passent d’objet, s’organisent selon une loi qui échappe à toute préméditation, se fait et se défait dans le même temps qu’elle se manifeste.” Max Morise, “Les yeux enchantés,” *La Révolution Surréaliste* 1 (December 1, 1924): 27.
 - 17 Spies, *Loplop*. The reference is to Rimbaud, “La main à plume vaut la main à charrue.” (The hand that writes is as good as the hand that plows.) Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell and Illuminations: Poems by Arthur Rimbaud*, trans. Bertrand Mathieu (Rochester: BOA Editions, 2000), 6–7.—Trans.
 - 18 Ralf Konersmann describes the frottages as “imagination machines,” in “Max Ernst und die Idee der Naturgeschichte,” in *Die Erfindung der Natur: Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Wols und das surreale Universum*, exhibition catalog, ed. Karin Orchard and Jörg Zimmermann (Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 1994), 159.
 - 19 For ideological and sociological foundations, see Dario Gamboni, *The Brush and the Pen: Odilon Redon and Literature*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
 - 20 See the investigations of Holländer, “Ars inveniendi et investigandi: Zur surrealistischen Methode,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 32 (1970); Elizabeth Legge, “Zeuxis’s Grapes, Novalis’s Fossils, Freud’s Flowers: Max Ernst’s Natural History,” *Art History* 16 (1993): 147–72; and Jörg Zimmermann, “Philosophische Horizonte der Histoire naturelle von Max Ernst,” in *Die Erfindung der Natur*, ed. Orchard and Zimmerman, 15–24.
 - 21 Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 46–48; Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 321–24.
 - 22 Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 183–266.
 - 23 Between the frottaged coins and the surrealist frottages, Ernst used this technique in rather incidental works. Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 433ff., 593, 596. During his vacation in the Tirol in 1921, he frottaged a bull’s head and its base (wood grain was utilized). It was surely no accident that the artist first tried frottage in the context of a naturalistic image while at a geographic remove from the urban centers of Dadaism. On the Dadaist turn to nature in the Tirol, see Raoul Schrott, *Dada 21/22: Musikalische Fischsuppe mit Reiseeindrücken: Eine Dokumentation über die beiden Dadajahre in Tirol* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1988).
 - 24 On the anti-architectural, see Denis Hollier, *La Prise de la Concorde* (Paris: Gallimard 1974).
 - 25 André Masson, *Le Rebelle du surréalisme: Écrits* (Paris: Hermann, 1976), 37: “Matériellement: un peu de papier, un peu d’encre. Psychiquement: il faut faire le vide en soi; le dessin automatique prenant sa source dans l’inconscient, doit apparaître comme une imprévisible naissance. Les premières apparitions graphiques sur le papier sont geste pur, rythme, incantation, et comme résultat: pur gribouillis. C’est la première phase. Dans la seconde phase, l’image (qui était latente) réclame ses droits. Quand l’image est apparue, il faut s’arrêter. Cette image n’est qu’un vestige, une trace, une épave. [. . .] Essayons de conclure par cette définition: l’image prend naissance dans l’océan émotionnel et à la fin s’y déverse ou, comme il vous plaira: y retourne.” (Materially: a bit of paper and ink; psychically, you have to empty your mind. Automatic drawing, taking its source from the unconscious, must appear like an unforeseeable birth. The first graphic manifestations on the paper are pure gesture, rhythm, incantation—in effect, pure scrawl. That is the first phase. In the second phase, the image (which was latent) reclaims its rights. When the image has become visible, stop. This image is only a vestige, a trace, a hull. . . . Let us attempt to conclude with this definition: the image is born in an ocean of emotions and ultimately flows back into it or, if you will, returns to it.)

- 26 Holländer, “Ars inveniendi et investigandi.”
- 27 “The ground beneath my feet is nothing but an enormous unfolded newspaper. Sometimes a photograph comes by; it is a nondescript curiosity, and from the flowers there uniformly rises the smell, the good smell, of printers’ ink. I heard it said in my youth that the smell of hot bread is intolerable to sick people, but I repeat that the flowers smell of printers’ ink. The trees themselves are only more or less interesting minor news items: a fire here, a derailment there.” Breton, *Soluble Fish*, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 60. See Elisabeth Lenk, *Der Springender Narziß: André Breton poetischer Materialismus* (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1971), 58ff., 71ff.
- 28 “At the bottom of the fourth page the newspaper has an unusual fold that I can describe as follows: it looks as if it has been wrapped around a metallic object, judging by a rusty spot that might be a forest, and this metallic object might be a weapon of an unfamiliar shape, akin to the dawn and a large Empire bed.” Breton, *Soluble Fish*, 60.
- 29 Even before Ernst and Breton, Louis Aragon celebrated seeing-in as a surrealist activity: *Anicet ou le panorama* (Paris: Gallimard, 1921), 48ff.; *Le Paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1926), 15, 19, and elsewhere; for background, see Jean-Claude Lebensztejn’s fundamental study, *L’Art de la tache: Introduction à la Nouvelle méthode d’Alexandre Cozens* (Montélimar: Editions du Limon, 1990).
- 30 The title refers to a canonical text of the surrealists, Alfred Jarry’s *Caesar Antichrist*. The title character is a furious demiurge who, in the taunting creation of all possible worlds, acts like the divine model of Père Ubu. On Caesar’s Palette lies a leaf, which has left a hole where it just was. Frottage becomes a tool of Jarry’s annihilating world-maker, who paints not with pigments but with fragments of reality. Thus, the image as a whole not only shows Caesar’s palette; insofar as the title can be understood metonymically, it has been produced with Caesar’s palette. That it resembles canvas and that a canvas in fact forms its basis as the underlay can again be read as an appropriation of the traditional painter’s paraphernalia, which have now been placed in service to the reality-annihilating art of surrealism. Jarry, *Les Minutes de sable mémorial: César Antechrist* (Paris: Fasquelle 1932); in Spies and Metken, Max Ernst: *Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 872, see the related frottage that is also named after one of Jarry’s heroes: Faustroll’s Palette; see Zimmermann, “Philosophische Horizonte,” 23.
- 31 Laurent Jenny, “L’automatisme comme mythe rhétorique,” in *Une pelle au vent*, ed. Murat and Berranger, 29; Jenny, *La parole singulière*, 150–52.
- 32 “Moreover, the very idea of ‘three kingdoms’—animal, vegetable, and mineral—is the height of absurdity. If a phyllium alights on a branch, who can be sure that it is not a leaf from the tree that flies away a little later, leaving the leaf-insect in its place?” André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Tyler (Boston: MFA Publications, 1972), 44–46.
- 33 Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, 21.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 35 See Thomas M. Scheerer, *Textanalytische Studien zur “Écriture automatique”* (Bonn: Romanisches Seminar der Universität, 1974), 104ff.; and Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production*, trans. Terese Lyons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), chap. 14.
- 36 “I can see André Breton calmly making a daily tableau from a fantastic quest. I wandered with him through a reinvented zoology, a reinvented botany. We stopped in front of the cages, we glanced into the greenhouses.” Louis Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, trans. Alyson Waters (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 104–5.
- 37 Famously argued by Karl Heinz Bohrer, “Naturgefühl ist kein Gefühl der Natur: Die surrealistische Evokation der Natur mit Rücksicht auf das romantische Erhabene,” in *Ästhetik und*

- Natureerfahrung, ed. Jörg Zimmerman et al. (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), 418–40.
- 38 André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marguerite Bonnet et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1988–99), 1:340; 2:341–92.
- 39 “Little by little, fitfully, the world dawns on me, which does not mean that it is given; on the contrary, I gave it to myself, by choosing my own point of departure as the mathematician does the initial postulate. Its necessity is born of me. Thus, all nature is my contraption: what I don’t know about it, assuming such ignorance to be conceivable, lies buried in my unconscious, again like the mathematician who may found his science in one stroke and yet remain unaware of its inevitable consequences. Sensual experience strikes me, then, as the mechanism of awareness, which gives you some notion of what nature becomes: nature is my unconscious. . . . But for brief instants at most, on rare thresholds, I recognize the bond uniting the data of my senses, some of them, with nature itself, with the unconscious. The exquisite awareness of a fugitive presence is the shiver of which I spoke earlier.” Louis Aragon, *Nightwalker (Le Paysan de Paris)*, trans. Frederick Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 101–2.
- 40 Breton, *Œuvres*, 1:1122.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 1:369–72. On the rich metaphoric of water in surrealism, see Michel Beaujour, “De l’Océan au Château: Mythologie surréaliste,” *French Review* 42 (1969): 353–70; Nicole Boullestreau, *La poésie de Paul Eluard* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1985), 77–81; Abastado, “Écriture automatique et instance du sujet”; Murat, “Jeux de l’automatisme” and “Les Lieux communs de l’écriture automatique”; Berranger, “Poisson soluble ou les Mains vierges”; Michael Riffaterre, “The Surrealist Libido, André Breton’s *Poisson soluble*,” *Dada/Surrealism* 17 (1988): 59–60; and Julia Kristeva, “L’inquiétante étrangeté de l’automatisme: A propos de *Poisson soluble*,” in *Une pelle au vent*, ed. Murat and Berranger, 113–24.
- 42 An iconographic reading of the circle motif, which does not consider its narrative function, can be found in Legge, “Zeuxis’s Grapes, Novalis’s Fossils, Freud’s Flowers,” 149ff.
- 43 Breton, *Œuvres* 1:340; on the picture within the picture as wish fulfillment, see Spies, *Loplop*, 35ff.
- 44 Wood grain recurs most frequently as a material underlay. It connects the atmospheric phenomenon of the beginning of the world (prints 1–3) with Leonardo da Vinci’s stained wall (print 21), forms a threatening shadow (print 12), is capable of representing the expanse of the earth’s still unpopulated surface (print 3) or the Pampas (print 6) as well as the veins of leaves (prints 13, 18), and—of course?—a wooden board (prints 23, 26, 27). A coarse canvas netting yields a bread crust (print 23), a reptile’s carapace (prints 27, 28, 30), and rock (print 29), as well as the hide of an animated horse (print 32). A diamond pattern, still unidentified, alternatively stands in for the surface of a scouring rush (print 7) and for the elongated swells of the primordial sea (prints 9, 22, 24, 30). An intricate snakeskin serves for the scales of prehistoric plants (print 17) and for a stone substratum (print 29). A radial pattern makes light phenomena (print 2), ice flowers (print 4), or eyes (prints 30, 31). Finally, the comb from print 1 finds a new, more suitable application in print 29, in which it is used to form the regular curves between the eyelashes. On the different textures, see also Werner Spies, *Frottages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968).
- 45 The title *The Vaccinated Bread (Le Pain vacciné)* may well mean that the bread is immune from mold—a preserved, rock-hard piece of bread, a bread petrifact.
- 46 See Wolfgang Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jah-*

- runderts (Munich: Mäander, 1983), 52; and Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009).
- 47 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 681 and elsewhere.
- 48 This observation is made by Jürgen Pech, *Max Ernst, "Histoire Naturelle": Frottagen*, exhibition catalog (Brühl: Max-Ernst-Kabinett, 1983), 388, though he thinks wood grain has been used as the underlay.
- 49 On surrealist metaphors, particularly the extended metaphor, see Riffaterre, "The Extended Metaphor in Surrealist Poetry," in *Text Production*, chap. 12.
- 50 André Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 25.
- 51 The concluding figure of Eve distinguishes Ernst's series from its most important model in the art of the nineteenth century, Odilon Redon's eight-part series *The Origins* (*Les Origines*). Ernst makes many allusions to Redon's lithographs. He certainly was familiar with the symbolist iconography of the single eye—for example, one could compare the knothole eye in print 18 with Redon's illustrations of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" or the heavenly body in Redon's *A Drowned Woman* (*Une noyée*) with print 2 of *Natural History*. The series as a whole might also be compared to *The Origins*, in which imaginative seeing and the Romantic conception of a history of nature as the history of the subject are likewise brought into connection. Redon's nature also exclusively produces monsters, which emerge from a prehistoric darkness coinciding with the black color characteristic of his art. From out of the suggestive indeterminacy of the first print, the viewer is met by seed-shaped eye creatures that form themselves into a dog-like figure, so slowly and laboriously that the viewer finds it difficult to traverse the space of this primordial soup world. The gaze, whose wondrous generation Redon documents in the following prints of his natural history—the flower's skyward aspect and Polyphemus, the satyr's cynical expression and the female centaur's precise line of sight as she shoots a snake—is in danger by the end of the series of being engulfed in darkness again. Pegasus stares helplessly at the sky and flails his front legs; his hindquarters remain stuck to the ground, where the dirty shadow of his wings keeps him firmly anchored. In the last print—a hunched man stumbles into brightness—it is undecided whether the light means release or blinding dazzlement. This final turn is possibly answered by that of *Natural History*, which replaces the bedazzled Adam with the *Rückenfigur* of Eve. Already in the previous print, the surrealist Pegasus (fig. 32) is not stuck to the earth but rises into the air above the stony ground. While Redon does not think that the organic, which in his pictures emerges from a black ooze, can possibly have a happy future, the surrealist would like to make way for one, specifically through the inorganic ruins of an extinct nature. On Redon's *The Origins*, see Sven Sandström, *Le monde imaginaire d'Odilon Redon: Étude iconologique* (Lund: G. Wittenborn, 1955); and Douglas Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, "In the Public Eye," in *Odilon Redon, 1840–1916*, exhibition catalog (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1994), 158ff. The album was originally not numbered or titled and was published in an edition of only twenty-five copies. Not until 1913 did Redon establish the title and sequence. See Ted Gott, *The Enchanted Stone: The Graphic Worlds of Odilon Redon*, exhibition catalog (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1990), 67.
- 52 André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove; London: Evergreen, 1960), 27; see Marguerite Bonnet, *André Breton: Naissance de l'aventure surréaliste* (Paris: Corti, 1975), 189–91; and Georges Raillard, "On signe ici," *Littérature* 25 (February 1977): 12ff. Attention should also be drawn to Breton's prophetic interpretation of his own poetry in *Mad Love*.

- 53 Michael Riffaterre, “Ekphrasis lyrique,” in *Lire le regard: André Breton et la peinture*, ed. Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron (Paris: Lachenal & Ritter, 1993).
- 54 Spies, *Frottages*.
- 55 English title in *Beyond Painting: Iceflower Shawl and Gulf Stream*.
- 56 English title in *Beyond Painting: The Chestnut Trees Take Off*.
- 57 *Révolution surréaliste* 7 (June 15, 1926). Arp himself translated the French version into German, in the course of which he reworked the text and made it roughly twice as long. The English translation by Ralph Manheim cited below, “introduction to max ernst’s natural history,” was evidently made from the German version. In *Max Ernst, Beyond Painting and Other Writings* (New York: Schultz, 1948), 124–25.
- 58 “la médaille se lève tandis que le soleil, après cinquante ans de service, se retire dans les roues calcinées de la lumière. c’est l’homme qui a remplacé les réveille-matin par les tremblements de terre, les averses de dragées par des averses de grêle. l’ombre de l’homme rencontrant celle d’une mouche cause une inondation. c’est l’homme aussi qui a appris aux chevaux à s’embrasser comme des présidents.” (fifty suns and fifty medals rise while the pseudo-sun after fifty years of service retires into the calcinated wheels of light. . . it is man who replaced alarm clocks by earthquakes showers of jordan almonds by showers of hail. the shadow of man encountering the shadow of a fly causes a flood. Thus it is man who has taught horses to embrace one another like presidents. . . .)
- 59 “les épouvantails portant dans leurs boutonnières des volcans et geysers.”
- 60 “comme un lion qui flaire férocement un succulent couple de jeunes mariés, le tilleul pousse docilement sur les plaines plancheiées.” “Tractably” is R. Manheim’s translation; Arp says the lime tree grows “docilement” in reference to the title of the print, *le tilleul est docile* (*The Lime Tree Is Docile*).—Trans.
- 61 The French version is shorter: “les feuilles ne poussent jamais sur les arbres, comme une montagne vue à vol d’oiseau elles n’ont pas de perspective. le spectateur se trouve toujours dans une position fausse devant une feuille.”
- 62 “avec ces onze queues et demie l’homme compte dix objets et demi dans la chambre meublée de l’univers.”
- 63 “a dancer’s calf in the ecclesiastical ballet.”
- 64 “voici le coucou l’origine de la pendule le bruit de ses mâchoires ressemble à celui d’une forte chute de cheveux.”
- 65 “du temps de la récolte des diamants conjugaux on rencontre sur les mers d’immenses armoires à glace flottant sur leurs dos.”
- 66 Kaufmann, *Poétique des groupes littéraires*.
- 67 Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, 35; Jenny, *La parole singulière*, 149ff.
- 68 On the history and poetics of natural science illustrations, see Martin J. S. Rudwick’s fundamental study, *Scenes from Deep Time: Early Pictorial Representations of the Prehistoric World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 69 On education and the historical turn to objectivity as a value of scientific illustrations in the nineteenth century, see Lorraine Daston and Peter Gallison, “The Image of Objectivity,” *Representations* 40 (1992): 81–128.
- 70 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 839.
- 71 Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time*. Evan Maurer has already observed that *Natural History* reflects “Ernst’s continuing interest in the illustrated books and magazines of natural science that

he had begun to use as sources of illustrations for his collages in the early 1920s.” Maurer, “Images of Dream and Desire,” 59. Derenthal and Pech also emphasize the “scientific appearance.” Ludger Derenthal and Jürgen Pech, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Françaises, Casterman, 1992), 101.

72 Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time*.

73 “Ces catéchismes appelés manuels d’histoire naturelle” (these catechisms called natural history manuals), in the text “il fait beau” (it’s a beautiful day), written by André Breton, Benjamin Péret, and Robert Desnos and dedicated to Max Ernst, in *Littérature* 9 (1923). On the pedagogical and moralistic intention of popular natural history, see Jean-Marc Brouin and Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, “Nature for the People,” in *Cultures of Natural History*, ed. Nicolas Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 408–25.

74 Spies, *Frottages*; Derenthal and Pech, *Max Ernst*, 108. On Ernst’s Catholic iconography, see David Hopkins, *Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jürgen Pech, “Studien zur religiösen Ikonographie im Werk von Max Ernst bis 1934: der Collagenroman ‘Rêve d’une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel’ (1930)” (PhD diss., Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1996).

75 “Ce que nous appelions bien fièrement ‘notre éducation’ est à refaire de fond en comble et Max Ernst a raison, qui, sous le simple titre *Histoire naturelle*, nous présente réunies en trente-quatre planches les terribles merveilles d’un univers dont notre semelle n’essaiera plus d’écraser les petits secrets, désormais plus grands que nous.” René Crevel, “*Histoire naturelle*,” *Nouvelle Revue Française* 169 (October 1927): 554ff.

76 Laurent Jenny, “La surréalité et ses signes narratifs,” *Poétique* 16 (1973): 500ff.

77 Dominique Bozo, *André Breton*, exhibition catalog (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1991), 170.

78 “Je vais soutenir une thèse étrange. Je vais prétendre que le premier livre à mettre entre les mains de l’enfance doit se rapporter à l’histoire naturelle; et qu’au lieu d’appeler l’attention admirative des jeunes esprits sur les fables de la Fontaine, les aventures du Chat botté, l’histoire de Peau d’âne, ou les amours de Vénus, il faut la diriger sur les spectacles naïfs et simples de la nature: la structure d’un arbre, la composition d’une fleur, les organes des animaux, la perfection des formes cristallines d’un minéral, l’arrangement intérieur des couches composant la terre que nous foulons sous nos pieds.” (I am going to advance an unusual thesis. I will propose that the first book put into the hands of youth should pertain to natural history; and, instead of calling the admiring attention of young minds to the fables of La Fontaine, the adventures of Puss in Boots, the story of Donkeyskin, or the loves of Venus, attention should be directed to the pure and simple spectacles of nature: the structure of trees, the composition of flowers, the organs of animals, the perfection of a mineral’s crystalline forms, the arrangement of the stratified layers that compose the very earth that we trample beneath our feet.) Louis Figuier, preface to *La Terre avant le déluge* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1863). On natural history as children’s literature, see Harriet Ritvo, “Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Children’s Literature* 13 (1985): 72–79.

79 Wolf Lepenies, *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte: Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: C. Hanser, 1976).

80 “Ce sont aussi des espèces de fables, mais des fables produites par une imagination active qui a besoin de créer, et non par une imagination passive qui cède à des impressions étrangères.” (These are also kinds of fables, but fables produced by an active imagination with the need to create, not by a passive imagination that yields to external impressions.) Condorcet, “Eloge de M. de Buffon,” in *Œuvres complètes de Condorcet* (Paris: Chez Henrichs, 1804), 89.

- 81 I am following the assessment of Konersmann, “Max Ernst und die Idee der Naturgeschichte,” 164, who calls the connections to the natural history of the eighteenth century “associative”; by contrast, cf. Zimmermann, “Philosophische Horizonte.”
- 82 “Aucun Mammifère, aucun Oiseau n’avait encore apparû; rien n’interrompait le silence des airs, sinon le sifflement des reptiles terrestres et le vol de quelques insectes ailés.” (No mammal, no bird had yet appeared; nothing interrupted the silence of the air, except for the hissing of the terrestrial reptiles and the flight of some winged insects.) Figuiet, *La Terre avant le déluge*, 175.
- 83 “The Eternal Signs: I remember the strange and profound impression made upon me as a child by a plate in an old book that bore the title *The World before the Flood*. The plate represented a landscape of the tertiary period. Man was not yet present. I have often meditated upon the strange phenomenon of this absence of human beings in its metaphysical aspect. . . . There are paintings by Böcklin, Claude Lorrain and Poussin which are inhabited by human figures, but which, in spite of this, bear a close relationship with the landscape of the Tertiary. Absence of humanity in man. Some of Ingres’s portraits achieve this too. It should, however, be observed that in the works cited above (except perhaps in a few paintings by Böcklin), only the first solitude exists: plastic solitude. Only in the new Italian metaphysical painting does the second solitude appear: solitude of signs, or the metaphysical.” Giorgio de Chirico, “On Metaphysical Art,” as reprinted in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 282–83. On de Chirico’s interest in Figuiet and Riou, see Jean Clair, “Chronos und Mnemosyne,” in *Giorgio de Chirico*, exhibition catalog (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 1982), 79–88.
- 84 Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, 29, 32. Breton outlines the project of a disciplining of memory that would extend across generations, thus promising a new absolute memory—a memory that encompasses and keeps present every dream and, what’s more, the entire unconscious. Breton, *Œuvres*, 1:317–20.
- 85 Breton, *Œuvres*, 1:369–72.
- 86 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 605. Pech, *Max Ernst “Histoire naturelle,”* 361, already recognized the connection with Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Ernst’s painting shows a man in a tuxedo, who can be identified as a waiter by the glass that replaces his head. His legs are spread wide; he is running through an interior space resembling a stage set. An enormous glove is covering his right hand; his arm, which seems to have been stuck onto his body, swings like a rubber band. His movement is obviously uncontrolled—especially since his head, and thus the conscious thought process of the writer, has been replaced by a glass. This stands metonymically for its contents, in all likelihood an alcoholic fluid, which promotes the flowing of unconscious streams. In the waiter’s automatism, despite the large glove, the swinging right hand, and the liquefaction of consciousness, the mysterious M returns. However, it is no longer memory as a conventionalized and available past, but inaccessible deep time, which lies beyond practiced memory and conserves the prehistoric kingdom of “inadmissible flora and fauna.”
- 87 “Surrealism’s whole effort in particular for the last 15 years has been to obtain from the poet the instantaneous revelation of these verbal traces whose psychic charges are capable of being communicated to the perception-consciousness system (and also to obtain from the painter the most rapid projection possible of optical mnemonic traces). I shall never tire of repeating that automatism alone is the dispenser of the elements on which the secondary work of emotional amalgamation and passage from the unconscious to the preconscious can oper-

- ate effectively.” Breton, “The Political Position of Surrealism,” in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 230. In view of these crucial words, with which Ernst as a reader of Freud would have agreed, in my opinion it does not make sense to think of Ernst as a painter of “*mémoire involontaire*” (involuntary memory) (Spies, *Frottages*) or to cite Bergson (Maurer, “Images of Dream and Desire,” 68).
- 88 The Loplop cycle, made during 1930, also consists largely of retroactive hints about Ernst’s secrets of production. See Spies, *Loplop*.
- 89 This is pointed out by Holländer, “Es rauscht in den Schachtelhalmen . . .,” in *Ikonographia: Anleitung zum Lesen von Bildern (Festschrift Donat de Chapeaurouge)*, ed. Bazon Brock and Achim Preiss (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1990). At the same time, in *The Hundred-Headed Woman*, Ernst used Riou’s illustration “Ideal Landscape of the Permian Period.”
- 90 Kaufmann, *Poétique des groupes littéraires*.
- 91 And in English, there is the “damselfly.”—Trans.
- 92 Pierre Naville, *Le temps du surréel* (Paris: Galilée, 1977); Jean-Charles Gateau, *Paul Eluard et la peinture surréaliste (1910–1939)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1982); Jean-Charles Gateau, *Eluard: Le frère voyant, 1895–1952* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1988); Paul Éluard, *Lettres à Gala, 1924–1948* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
- 93 Max Ernst, *Frottages*, exhibition catalog (Paris: Galerie Berggruen, 1956). Also see the frottaged double portrait, Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 1063.
- 94 Spies, *Frottages*.
- 95 “. . . a little table that did not appear to be anything special and was made out of ordinary wood. However, it had one good quality. Whenever one put it down and said, ‘table, be covered,’ it would immediately be covered by a clean tablecloth, and on it would be a plate with a fork and a knife, and dishes with roasted and stewed meat, as much as there was room for on the table, and a large glass of red wine to tickle one’s throat.” “The Magic Table, the Golden Donkey, and the Club in the Sack,” in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Jack Zipes (New York: Bantam Books), 124.—Trans.
- 96 “A table for children, / there are women whose eyes are like sugar cubes / there are women as serious as love unperceived, / there are women whose faces are pale, / others like the sky the night before the wind. / Little table gilded for holidays, / there are women of wood dark and green: / the ones who laugh.” In Paul Éluard, *Capital of Pain*, trans. Mary Ann Caws, Patricia Terry, and Nancy Kline (Boston: Black Widow Press, 2006). “Petite table enfantine, / il y a des femmes dont les yeux sont comme des morceaux de sucre, / il y a des femmes graves comme les mouvements de l’amour qu’on ne surprend pas, / il y a des femmes au visage pâle d’autres comme le ciel à la veille du vent. / Petite table dorée des jours de fête, / il y a des femmes de bois vert et sombre: / celles qui pleurent, de bois sombre et vert: / celles qui rient. . .” Paul Éluard, *Œuvres complètes I*, ed. Lucien Scheler (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 141. Jean-Charles Gateau refers to Éluard’s “table be covered” motif in his *Paul Eluard: Capitale de la douleur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 65ff.
- 97 Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1966), 156–58; Breton, *Œuvres*, 2:124.
- 98 Here is the other half of the poem: “Little table too low or too high, / there are fat women / with slender shadows, / there are hollow dresses, / dry dresses, / house dresses that love can’t get out the door // Little table, / I don’t like the tables on which I dance, / I didn’t realize that.” (*Petite table trop basse ou trop haute, / il y a des femmes grasses / avec des ombres légères, / il y a des robes creuses, / des robes sèches, / des robes que l’on porte chez soi et que l’amour*

- ne / fais jamais sortir / Petite table, / je n'aime pas les tables sur lesquels je danse, / je ne m'en doutais pas.)
- 99 Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), chap. 2; in addition, on Ernst's psychoanalytic Gala iconography, see Elizabeth Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), chap. 4.
- 100 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 636–52; Ludger Derenthal, "Die Wandmalereien für Eaubonne," in *Max Ernst: Das Rendezvous der Freunde*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 1991), 181–86.
- 101 "Paul Eluard: Does Breton Enjoy Licking a Woman's Eyeball?," in *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Research 1928–1932*, trans. Malcolm Imrie, ed. José Pierre (London: Verso, 1992).
- 102 Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 10:140ff.
- 103 Éluard, *Œuvres* 1:176ff. Caws et al. translate "nature without banks" (nature sans rivage) as "unbounded space"; see below.—Trans. See also Gateau, *Paul Eluard: Capitale de la douleur*, 124ff.
- 104 "Je sors au bras des ombres, / Je suis au bas des ombres, / Seul. / La pitié est plus haut et peut bien y rester, / La vertu se fait l'aumône de ses seins / Et la grâce s'est prise dans les filets de ses paupières. / Elle est plus belle que les figures des gradins, / Elle est plus dure, / Elle est en bas avec les pierres et les ombres / Je l'ai rejointe // C'est ici que la clarté livre sa dernière bataille. / Si je m'endors, c'est pour ne plus rêver. / Quelles seront alors les armes de mon triomphe? / Dans mes yeux grands ouverts le soleil fait les joints, / O jardin de mes yeux! / Tous les fruits sont ici pour figurer des fleurs, / Des fleurs dans la nuit, / Une fenêtre de feuillage / S'ouvre soudain dans son visage. / Où poserais-je mes lèvres, nature sans rivage? // Une femme est plus belle que le monde où je vis / Et je ferme les yeux. / Je sors au bras des ombres, / Je suis au bas des ombres / Et des ombres m'attendent." Éluard, *Œuvres* 1:176ff. (I go out on the arm of the shadows, / I rest at the foot of the shadows, / Alone. // Pity is a step above, and may as well stay there, / Virtue offers her breasts to herself / And grace is caught in the nets of her eyelids. / She is lovelier than the shapes on the tiered steps, / She is harder, / She is below, amidst the stones and shadows, / I have found her again. // Here clarity fights its last battle. / If I go to sleep, it's so as not to dream again. / Then what will my triumphant weapons be? / I open my eyes wide in the assembling sun, / Oh garden of my eyes! / Here all the fruits embody flowers, / Flowers of the night. / A window of foliage / Opens suddenly in her face. / Where will I rest my lips, unbounded space? // A woman is more beautiful than the world where I exist / And I close my eyes. / I go out on the arm of the shadows. / I rest at the foot of the shadows, / And the shadows wait for me.") Éluard, *Capital of Pain*, 157.

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 On Breton's utopian future transparency of surrealist communication even outside of the group, see André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marguerite Bonnet et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1988–99), 2:440.
- 2 "The legibility of the individual elements juxtaposed in these paintings invites interpretation: the juxtapositions resist it. An essential component in attempting to piece together their meanings is Ernst's reading of psychoanalytic literature." Elizabeth Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 1. The literature on Ernst's psychoanalytic iconography is plentiful; however, the boundary between psychoanalytically informed iconography and psychoanalytic interpretation in the narrower sense is not always clearly marked. See Elizabeth Legge, "Max Ernst's *Œdipus Rex* and the Implicit Sphinx," *Arts*

- Magazine 61 (September 1986): 50–53; Malcolm Gee, “Max Ernst, God, and the Revolution by Night,” *Arts Magazine* 55 (March 1981): 85–91; Geoffrey Hinton, “Max Ernst: ‘Les Hommes n’en sauront rien,’” *Burlington Magazine* 117 (1975): 9–20; Jeanne Siegel, “Max Ernst’s One Night of Love,” *Arts Magazine* 57 (1983): 112–15; Laura Meixner, “Max Ernst’s *Aquis Submersus* as Literary Collage,” *Arts Magazine* 61 (November 1986): 80–85; Charlotte Stokes, “Collage as Joke: Freud’s Theories of Wit as the Foundation for the Collages of Max Ernst,” *Leonardo* 15 (1982): 199–204; and Gerd Bauer, “Ein Meisterstreich von Dadamax,” in *Fatagaga-Dada: Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Johannes Theodor Baargeld und der Kölner Dadaismus*, ed. Karl Riha and Jürgen Schäfer (Giessen: Anabas, 1995), 121–41.
- 3 “. . . the sum total evades an exact interpretation—this is the basis of the strong poetic provocation of Max Ernst’s works. Their analysis supplies many separately comprehensible elements, but the final interpretation evades us despite our knowledge of the details. An attempt to explain the hermetic picture with the help of psychoanalytical methods is also doomed to failure. In the case of Max Ernst, such an attempt seems to be the most naive of all and reveals the smallest degree of comprehension.” This is Werner Spies’s basic conviction, acquired through close acquaintance with the artist, as first formulated in *The Return of la belle jardinière: Max Ernst, 1950–1970*, trans. Robert Allen (New York: Abrams, 1971), 37–38.
 - 4 This is also the case in productive and stimulating studies such as Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources*; Christa Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose vom Mythos zum Prozessdenken: Ovid-Rezeption, surrealistische Ästhetik, Verwandlungsthematik der Nachkriegskunst* (Weinheim: VCH, 1992); Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); and Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
 - 5 On the ambiguous relationship of surrealism to psychoanalysis, see Jean Starobinski, “Freud, Breton, Myers” (1970), in *Psychoanalyse und Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 143–62; J. B. Pontalis, “Die nicht kommunizierenden Röhren (1978),” in *Aus dem Blick verlieren: Im Horizont der Psychoanalyse* (Munich: Kirchheim, 1991), 140–59; Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*; and David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).
 - 6 On this text, see also Spies, *Loplop*, 107–9.
 - 7 Ludger Derenthal and Jürgen Pech, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Françaises, Casterman, 1992), 115–17.
 - 8 See the fundamental studies by Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources*; and Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*; on Ernst and Leonardo in general, see Werner Hofmann, “Max Ernst und die Tradition,” in *Max Ernst: Das Innere Gesicht*, exhibition catalog (Hamburg: Kunsthalle Hamburg, 1970), 14ff.; Whitney Chadwick, *Myth in Surrealist Painting, 1929–1939* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 87–96; and Spies, *Loplop*, 101–6; for a summary of the effective history of Freud’s Leonardo study, see Klaus Herding, “Freud’s ‘Leonardo,’” *Im Blickfeld: Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle* 3 (1998): 9–32; On Ernst and the concept of the primal scene, cf. also Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 70–84.
 - 9 “. . . toutes les horreurs, que mon père est capable d’éveiller aimablement dans un panneau de faux acajou au moyen de son affreux crayon mou.” The English is from Max Ernst, “History of a Natural History” (evidently a translation of the later version of the text, “Comment on force l’inspiration”), trans. Dorothea Tanning, in *Beyond Painting and Other Writings* (New York: Schultz, 1948), 3–4.
 - 10 Freud, “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works*

- of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing, www.pep-web.org), 17:43.
- 11 Legge, Max Ernst: *The Psychoanalytic Sources*, 6ff.
 - 12 “Nachträglichkeit.” One criticism of Strachey’s “deferred action” or “deferred” for *nachträglich* is its orientation toward the future, while a term such as “retroactive” would more suitably retain a sense of orientation toward the past. I use “after the fact” when possible.—Trans.
 - 13 See Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, chap. 2; and Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 81–83.
 - 14 Freud, “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis.”
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 97; see also the corresponding observations in the *Lectures* (with which Ernst was also familiar), Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 1:362.
 - 16 Freud, “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis,” 29.
 - 17 André Breton, *Soluble Fish in Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 60.
 - 18 *La Révolution surréaliste* 9–10 (December 1, 1927), cited in Spies, *Loplop*, 101.
 - 19 On the reception history of Leonardo’s wall stains in surrealism, see Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose*, 156–63.
 - 20 Spies, *Loplop*, 107; Siegel, “Max Ernst’s One Night of Love”; Derenthal and Pech, Max Ernst, 131.
 - 21 Freud, *Studienausgabe* 10:138ff.; Oskar Pfister, “Kryptolalie, Kryptographie und unbewußtes Vexierbild bei Normalen,” *Jahrbuch psychoanalytischer und psychopathologischer Forschungen* 5 (1913): 117–56.
 - 22 In print 27, *In the Stable of the Sphinx*, there appear to be at least two hidden creatures—which is not surprising from a psychoanalytic perspective, since Freud believed he detected an allegory of infantile sexual research in the riddle of the Sphinx. Freud, *Studienausgabe* 5:100. Infantile sexual research is closely associated with the primal scene, since the little observer strives to integrate it into his fantasies about the phallic woman and castration. The “stable of the Sphinx” is built of suggestive boards that elicit the same imaginative activity as the imitation mahogany that produced terrifying images in the “stable” of the parents’ bedroom. In the third board from the left, against the central crack is silhouetted an owl-like face, at which the Sphinx’s gaze is possibly directed. What’s more, the Sphinx itself proves to be a two-faced creature, its tail ending in a predator’s head.
 - 23 The first bird is hidden in the center of the fossil snail that forms the body of the plant standing in the wide expanse of the pampas (print 6); others follow. On Ernst’s avian mythology, see Hofmann, “Max Ernst und die Tradition,” 14–16; Spies, *Loplop*; Chadwick, *Myth in Surrealist Painting*, 87ff.
 - 24 Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose*, 163.
 - 25 “Partant d’un souvenir d’enfance au cours duquel un panneau de faux acajou, situé en face de mon lit, avait joué le rôle de provocateur optique d’une vision de demi-sommeil, et me trouvant, par un temps de pluie, dans une auberge au bord de la mer, je fus frappé par l’obsession qu’exerçait sur mon regard irrité le plancher, dont mille lavages avaient accentué les rainures.” Max Ernst, “Comment on force l’inspiration,” *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 5/6 (May 15, 1933), 45; see also Ernst, *Écritures*, 53. English version from Ernst, “History of a Natural History,” 3–4.
 - 26 *Herrliche Persiflage and Karikaturen*. Freud, *Studienausgabe* 8:64, 77. “The effrontery with which Hans related this fantasy and the countless extravagant lies with which he interwove it were anything but meaningless. All of this was intended as a revenge upon his father . . .” Freud, “Analysis of a

- Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy,” in *The Standard Edition* (1909); Two Case Histories (“Little Hans” and “Rat Man”), 10:129. See also in the case of the Wolf Man, Freud, *Studienausgabe* 8:183.
- 27 *Unterschieben*. The German verb—literally “to slide under,” with the sense “to wrongly attribute”—allows a connection to be understood here between the procedure of frottage and this act of misattribution.—Trans.
- 28 See the significance of the mustache for “little Hans” in Freud, *Studienausgabe* 8:49, 82, and elsewhere.
- 29 Cf. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 30 Michel de Certeau, *Theoretische Fiktionen: Geschichte und Psychoanalyse* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1997), 109, 124.
- 31 Freud, *Studienausgabe* 8:154, 208, 220.
- 32 “The fact of a dream referring to childhood may also be expressed in another way, namely by a translation of time into space. The characters and scenes are seen as though they were at a great distance, at the end of a long road, or as though they were being looked at through the wrong end of a pair of opera-glasses.” Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (first part; 1900), in *The Standard Edition*, 4:408.
- 33 On the phallic woman’s constituting a perfect, because flawless, not castrated seeing, see Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 110–36.
- 34 See Katharina Sykora, *Unheimliche Paarungen: Androidenfaszination und Geschlecht in der Fotografie* (Köln: W. König, 1999); and Mary Ann Caws, “Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art,” in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 390.
- 35 For example, Breton first read *The Interpretation of Dreams* in October 1926; Dominique Bozo, André Breton, exhibition catalog (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1991), 184.
- 36 Freud, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” in *The Standard Edition*, 9:133. On the surrealist critique of the Freudian conception of the unconscious, see André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 43ff.
- 37 Starobinski, “Freud, Breton, Myers.”
- 38 “infortune continue”; Breton, *Œuvres* 2:380.
- 39 “diarrhée inépuisable”; Louis Aragon, *Traité du style* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), 206ff.
- 40 “Lundi 27 octobre [1924] . . . Constaté l’empressement un peu désordonné de chacun à remettre des textes surréalistes d’intérêt souvent discutable, desquels on ne voit pas bien ce qui a déterminé le choix.” (Monday, October 27 [1924] . . . Remarked upon the somewhat muddled over-eagerness of whoever is notating surrealist texts, often of questionable interest. It’s difficult to see how the choices were made.) Paule Thévenin, ed. *Bureau de Recherches surréalistes: Cahier de la permanence octobre 1924–avril 1925* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 35.
- 41 Freud, “Instincts and Their Viscissitudes,” in *The Standard Edition*, 14:131; on Freud’s geologic metaphors, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Penguin, 1992), 55–57; Pierre Fédida, “La Regression: Formes et déformations,” in *Les Évolutions: Phylogénèse de l’individuation*, ed. Pierre Fédida and Daniel Widlöcher (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994), 48ff.; and Monique David-Ménard, “Symptômes et fossiles,” in *Les Évolutions*, ed. Fédida and Widlöcher, 253ff.
- 42 “If [man] still retains a certain lucidity, all he can do is turn back toward his childhood which, however his guides and mentors may have botched it, still strikes him as somehow charming.

There, the absence of any known restriction allows him the perspective of several lives lived at once; this illusion becomes firmly rooted within him; now he is only interested in the fleeting, the extreme facility of everything. Children set off each day without a worry in the world. Everything is near at hand, the worst material conditions are fine. The woods are white or black, one will never sleep.” Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, 3–4.

- 43 According to Foster’s thesis in *Compulsive Beauty*, chap. 1.
- 44 “Because what is projected here is a visual field that is not a latency, an ever renewed upsurge of the pure potentiality of the external, but instead a field that is already filled, already—so to say the word—readymade.” Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 54.
- 45 Freud, *Studienausgabe* 3:363–69.
- 46 Freud, “A Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad,” in *The Standard Edition*, 19:231.
- 47 “In *The Master’s Bedroom* the Wunderblock’s waxen slab finds its analogue in the underlying sheet of the teaching-aid page, in its inventory-like concatenation of objects, the stored-up contents of unconscious memory; while the apparatus’ top sheet appears as the perspectival covering of the gouache overpainting, the skinlike thickness of which seems to be an index of the way this receptor surface is detachable from its ground. This implication of detachment and reattachment relates to a further point Freud makes about the structure of the Wunderblock and its capacity to model the very nature of sensory stimulation: This stimulation, he says, is periodic in nature. It is pulsatile. . . . In *The Master’s Bedroom* it is not that this pulsatile motion is illustrated. Indeed the scene’s peculiar stillness is a striking feature of the collage. Rather, what is rendered is the sense of the gap, the detachment, the split that results from the pulse.” Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 57.
- 48 Freud, “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis,” , 17:48.
- 49 Other attempts, less ambitious than Krauss’s, include Bauer, “Ein Meisterstreich von Dada,” 136, which invokes Freud’s concept of the daydream from *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*; and Stokes, “Collage as Jokework,” which draws a parallel between collage and the mechanism of the joke as Freud explicates it in his well-known treatise; the comparison with the dream is also prevalent, according to Freud’s characterization of the dream as “something put together . . . a conglomeration of psychic images,” “picture-writing” or “rebus,” “a collective image . . . with contradictory features.” Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 87, 261, 274.
- 50 In Freud, *The Standard Edition*, 6:147.
- 51 *La Révolution surréaliste* 9–10 (October 1, 1927): 31; Freud, “The Question of Lay Analysis,” in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 20:177–258. Rinde means “bark,” “crust,” or “rind” as well as “cortex”; in the *Complete Psychological Works*, Strachey chooses “cortex,” denoting the tough outer layer of a bodily organ, the outermost layer of some simple organisms, or the bark or rind of a plant.—Trans.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 André Breton, *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism*, trans. Mark Polizotti (New York: Marlowe & Co., 1993), 21; Marguerite Bonnet, “La rencontre d’André Breton avec la folie: Saint-Dizier, août–novembre 1916,” in *Folie et psychanalyse dans l’expérience surréaliste*, ed. Fabienne Hulak (Nice: Z’édicions, 1992); Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 1ff.
- 2 On this point and what follows, see the fundamendal examination by Esther Fisher-Homberger, *Die traumatische Neurose: Vom somatischen zum sozialen Leiden* (Bern: H. Huber, 1975); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise: Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahr-*

- hundert (Munich: Hanser, 1977); Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Bernd Ulrich, "Nerven und Krieg: Skizzierung einer Beziehung," in *Geschichte und Psychologie: Annäherungsversuche*, ed. Bedrich Loewenstein (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992), 163–92; Paul Lerner, "'Ein Sieg deutschen Willens': Wille und Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Kriegspsychiatrie," in *Die Medizin und der Erste Weltkrieg*, ed. Wolfgang Wolfgang Uwe Eckart and Christoph Gradmann (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996); and Ruth Leys, "Death Masks: Kardiner and Ferenczi on Psychic Trauma," *Representations* 53 (1996): 44–73.
- 3 Karl Abraham, Sándor Ferenczi, and Ernest Jones, eds., *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1919).
 - 4 On Freud's "psychologizing of trauma and thus his resolution as an etiological factor," see Fischer-Homberger, *Die traumatische Neurose*, 74–80. As early as 1964, with their reference to Freud's biological and phylogenetic speculations, Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis called attention to how, in this psychologizing, the physical trauma is always preserved, as if shifted to a deeper level. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (1998): 1–18.
 - 5 Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise*, chap. 9.
 - 6 Sándor Ferenczi: "According to psychoanalysis, the war neuroses belong to a group of neuroses in which not only genital sexuality is implicated, as with the customary hysteria, but also a preliminary stage of it, the so-called 'narcissism,' or self-love." Karl Abraham: "Trauma affects the sexuality of many persons, in the sense that it provides the impulse for a regressive transformation that takes narcissism as its objective." *Zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen*, 25, 32.
 - 7 Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 41. See also Jean Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), 73. In Laplanche's French, "le traumatisme se trouve entièrement dans le jeu de 'fallace' qui produit une espèce de bascule entre les deux événements." Mehlman gives "seesaw effect" for "espèce de bascule," but "bascule" can also suggest a rocking back and forth, which perhaps is more suitable to describe this movement between an event in the present and an event in the past.—Trans.
 - 8 Bonnet, "La rencontre d'André Breton avec la folie," 125–27; Dominique Bozo, André Breton, exhibition catalog (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1991), 100–110.
 - 9 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
 - 10 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index Part I," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 196–209; Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
 - 11 Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen: Inventar und Widerspruch* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1974), 125, translated here; see also Spies, *Max Ernst Collages: The Invention of the Surrealist Universe*, trans. John William Gabriel (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 123–24. The existing English translation could not be used here because of its extensive reworking of this difficult passage.—Trans.
 - 12 Iconographic observations on surrealism and war can be found in Romy Golan, "Mythes surréalistes et imaginaires telluriques," in *Pensée mythique et surrealism*, ed. Jaqueline Chénieux-Gendron and Yves Vadé (Paris: Lachenal & Ritter, 1996), 183–206; Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995),

- 8–20; and Sidra Stich, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art*, exhibition catalog (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley University Art Museum, 1990).
- 13 As early as 1924, Louis Aragon defined the surreal as the fleeing horizon: “We have seen then what the Surreal is about. But to really understand the concept we have to extend it; view it perhaps like the horizon which continually flees before the walker, for like the horizon this concept exists between the mind and what it knows it will never reach.” Aragon, *A Wave of Dreams*, trans. Susan De Muth (London: Thin Man Press, 2010).
 - 14 Max Ernst, who served four years in the field artillery—as an “August volunteer,” according to a statement by his father—was awarded the Iron Cross, Second and First Class, and promoted to Lieutenant of the Reserve. See Jürgen Pech, “Daß ich nicht tot bin, freut mich” in *Fatagaga-Dada: Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Johannes Theodor Baargeld und der Kölner Dadaismus*, ed. Karl Riha and Jürgen Schäfer (Giessen: Anabas, 1995), 17–47.
 - 15 Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings* (New York: Schultz, 1948), 29.
 - 16 Leed, *No Man's Land*.
 - 17 Here, Ernst suggests reading rootless and severed plants, such as grow in Fields of Honor and elsewhere, as symptoms of the paternal castration threat.
 - 18 Louis Aragon, *Projet d'une histoire de la littérature moderne*, ed. Marc Dachy (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 3–6.
 - 19 Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *Urphantasie: Phantasien über den Ursprung, Ursprünge der Phantasie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1992).
 - 20 Spies, *Max Ernst Collage*, 42.
 - 21 Hal Foster, “Armor fou,” *October* 56 (Spring 1991): 64–97.
 - 22 Ludger Derenthal, “Mitteilungen über Flugzeuge, Engel und den Weltkrieg: Zu den Photocollagen der Dadazeit von Max Ernst,” in *Im Blickfeld. Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunsthalle* 2 (1994): 41–60.
 - 23 Werner Spies and Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975), no. 361.
 - 24 Bernd Ulrich, “Kampfmotivationen und Mobilisierungsstrategien: Das Beispiel Erster Weltkrieg,” in *Töten im Krieg*, ed. Heinrich von Stietencron and Jörg Rüpke (Freiburg im Breisgau: K. Alber, 1995), 405; Ulrich Bröckling, *Disziplin: Soziologie und Geschichte militärischer Gehorsamsproduktion* (München: W. Fink, 1997), 199–240.
 - 25 “Dort auf jenem hügel, so rief der general, sehe ich dichte schützenlinien. Warum werden sie mir nicht gemeldet? Es sind puppenräuber und blütenstände, wandte der adjudant ein. Und jene artilleriebeobachtungsstände da drüben? Das sind die brutknospen auf ihren leitern. Halblinks ist eine starke batterie von anscheinend großem kaliber, fragte der führer nochmals; solche führen wir doch nicht. Ew. Exzellenz haben ganz recht: es sind die bauchteile der einzelnen, die spitzengänger der zukunft, die gliedmaßen der im schnee begrabenen. Sie übertreffen die sporen an schönheit und klarheit. Sie sind mit wurzelhaaren dicht besetzt. Ihre halskanäle tragen feine wimpern. Die giftzähne verbergen sie in den weichteilen ihrer frauen. Atemöffnung (!) und assimilationsfäden tausendfach. Aus dem grunde des bechers der sonnentau. Vorwärts, antwortete dieser. Die schrumpfung der wandzelle. Das auskeimen der sporen. Die unverbesserliche Trinkerin.” *Dada Outdoors: Singing Contest in the Tirol* (*Dada au grand air: Der Sängerkrieg in Tirol*) (Tarrenz bei Imst, 1921); reprinted in Herzogenrath, *Max Ernst in Köln*, 313.
 - 26 Ludwig Aschoff, “Krankheit und Krieg: Eine akademische Rede” (“Disease and War: An Academic Lecture”), quoted in Wolfgang Eckart, “Aesculap in the Trenches: Aspects of German

- Medicine in the First World War,” in *War, Violence, and the Modern Condition*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 185.
- 27 “Schneeberger drückethäler” is a spoonerism of “Schneethäler” (dwellers in snow-covered valleys) and “Drückeberger” (shirkers [of military duty]).
- 28 On propaganda rumors, see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 116; on the point about collage, see Lucy Lippard, “Dada into Surrealism: Notes on Max Ernst as Proto-Surrealist,” *Artforum* (September 1966): 13.
- 29 Brigid Doherty, “‘See: We Are All Neurasthenics!’ or, The Trauma of Dada Montage,” *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Autumn 1997): 82–132.
- 30 See Hanne Bergius, “Dada, the Montage and the Press: Catchphrases and Cliché as Basic Twentieth-Century Principles,” in *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics*, ed. Stephen C. Foster (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), 129–32.
- 31 Spies, Max Ernst Collage; Rosalind Krauss, “The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 196–209.
- 32 Derenthal, “Mitteilungen über Flugzeuge, Engel und den Weltkrieg.”
- 33 On the relationship between frottage and collage, see Spies, *Max Ernst Collage*.
- 34 For comparable artistic devices, see Rosalind Krauss, “Corpus delicti,” in *L’Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, ed. Jane Livingstone, exhibition catalog (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), 57–110.
- 35 On this form of representation in general, see Richard Shiff, “Picasso’s Touch,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1990): 39–47. A similar approach, though with an entirely different, harmlessly playful effect, can be observed with the right arm: Ernst makes a clearly visible cut through the upper arm, and then retouches it with single blades of grass, as if here the figure were lying in the field. Evidently, a semantic play is at work with *Zerschneiden* (to cut apart) and *Überschneiden* (to overlap). The arm’s being overlapped by the grass—within the illusionistic logic that Ernst implies through the retouching—corresponds to its being cut by the collagist. See Shiff’s analysis of similar operations in Picasso’s first *papiers collés*, in “Cézanne’s Physicality: The Politics of Touch,” in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 160–66.
- 36 The fairy tale by this name in German renditions of Hans Christian Andersen is known in English as “The Nightingale.”—Trans.
- 37 Also, Ernst may have been interested, in Andersen’s fairy tale, in the thematizing of two related oppositions: that of organic and mechanical beauty, and that of display and the secret (which the nightingale is at the beginning and which it claims for itself at the end).
- 38 *Bombenflügel*, literally the bomb’s “wing.”
- 39 Just a sample: “Frau Wirtin hat ne sechste Tante, / die man die ‘schöne Rosa’ nannte. / Der war der Damm zerrissen. / Und wenn man sie mal vögeln wollt, / dann ward der Schwanz gerissen.” (In a prose rendering, the Hostess’s aunt named “pretty Rosa” suffered a perineal rupture, which made intercourse dangerous for whoever tried it.) These student drinking songs were published as “erotische Parodien, entsprungen dem Geiste des Volkstums” (erotic parodies borne of the folklore spirit) by Dr. Helmut and Dr. Allengo, “Der erotische Vierzeiler höher gebildeter Städter,” in *Beiwerke zum Studium der Anthropophytia*, ed. Dr. Friedrich S. Krauss (Leipzig: Ethnologischer Verlag, 1911), 4:210–37. Reference to Helmut and Allengo in Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977–78), 1:423. On the title, and for a precise technical analysis of the work, see also Ludger Derenthal, “Eine surreal-

- istische Révélation: Die erste Max Ernst-Ausstellung in Paris,” in *Max Ernst: Das Rendezvous der Freunde*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 1991), 65ff.
- 40 As in “Little Hans.” Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 8:87, 108–10.
- 41 Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*.
- 42 Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 83.
- 43 See Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
- 44 Derenthal, “Mitteilungen über Flugzeuge, Engel und den Weltkrieg,” 49.
- 45 The complete title reads “die flammingi lassen wieder papierdotter steigen / saturn ist an den enden der seezunge festgenagelt / wegen der nähe des magnetischen südpols versagen die erzengel” (the flamingos let paper yolks rise again / saturn is nailed fast to the ends of the dover sole [literally “sea-tongue”] / the archangels fail on account of proximity to the magnetic south pole).
- 46 On the aerial photograph, see Andreas Haus, “Luftbild—Raumbild—Neues Sehen,” *Photogeschichte* 12, nos. 45/46 (1992): 75–90; and Christoph Asendorf, *Super Constellation—Flugzeug und Raumrevolution: Die Wirkung der Luftfahrt auf Kunst und Kultur der Moderne* (Vienna: Springer, 1997).
- 47 See Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 375, 385, 391–97, and elsewhere, e.g., nos. 352, 356–58, 360, 366ff., etc.
- 48 “The very ability to presume an aerial perspective over the scene of one’s demise acted as a guarantee of survival and ensured that one’s personal demise was only a dream. . . . The sky is charged with intense significance: it must be the residence of the observer watching himself struggle through the nightmare of war, for only then will the eye survive the dismemberment of the body.” Leed, *No Man’s Land*, 137.
- 49 Peter Dering, “‘Seine Augen trinken alles . . .’—Max Ernsts Frühwerk 1910–1914,” in *Max Ernst und Bonn—Student, Kritiker, Rheinischer Expressionist*, ed. Dering (Bonn: Verein August Macke Haus, 1994), 31–57.
- 50 “Wir liegen an einem Waldrand mit unsern Munitionswagen; gewitterartig rollt der Kanonendonner am ganzen Horizont. Überall die kleinen Sprengwölkchen; beides gehört schon zur Landschaft, wie auch das Echo, das jeden Schuß verdoppelt weiterträgt. Plötzlich ein merkwürdiges Surren, das in einem ungeheuren Bogen über uns weggeht, ungleich, in steten Schwingungen, übergehend von hellem Pfeifen in tiefes Brummen; wie der hohe weite Schrei eines Raubvogels, immer kurz hintereinander, mit dem Eigensinn des Tieres, das keinen anderen Ruf kennt. Dann in der Ferne der dumpfe Knall. Es sind schwere feindliche Artilleriegeschosse, die über uns wegrasen, nach einem uns unbekannten Ziel. Ein Schuß zieht den anderen nach; der Himmel steht im reinsten Herbstblau und doch fühlen wir die hohen Rinnen, in denen die Geschosse ihn durchstürmen. Der Artilleriekampf hat selbst für den Artilleristen oft etwas Mystisches, Mythisches.” Franz Marc, *Schriften*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (Köln: DuMont, 1978), 158.
- 51 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 268–71.
- 52 Marc, *Schriften*, 152.

Die Welt ist zum Ersticken voll. Auf jeden Stein hat der Mensch ein Pfand seiner Klugheit gelegt. Jedes Wort ist gepachtet und belehnt. Was kann man thun zur Seligkeit als alles aufgeben und fliehen? als einen Strich ziehen zwischen dem Gestern und dem Heute?

In dieser That liegt die große Aufgabe unserer Zeit; die eine, für die es sich lohnt zu leben und zu sterben. [. . .]

So wandern wir fort in neue Gebiete und erleben die große Erschütterung, daß alles noch unbetreten, ungesagt ist, undurchfurcht und unerforscht. Die Welt liegt rein vor uns; unsre Schritte zittern. Wollen wir wagen zu gehen, so muß die Nabelschnur durchschnitten werden, die uns mit der mütterlichen Vergangenheit verbindet.

53 *Ibid.*, 208–10.

Ich ritt durch ein Städtchen mit lieblichen alten Bauten; die Frauen sahen aus den Fenstern. Die Stunde war bräunlich, hell und heimlich. Da befielen mich diese Gedanken von der Gefährlichkeit der toten, wieder todbringenden Dinge und von der großen Reinheit.

Sollten die guten alten Bilderstürmer schon meinen Sinn erraten haben? Etwas Wahres, Nahes, die “Gefahr” ahnten sie gewiß.

Ich aber trabte eilend aus dem Städtchen der vielen Erinnerungen und Ansteckungen, bis ich die reine Luft der Morgenröte roch.

54 Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*; Sandra Gilbert, “Soldier’s Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9 (1983): 422–50.

55 Ralph Ubl, “Wilhelm Worringer, Hans Arp und Max Ernst bei den Müttern: Überlegungen zum Primitivismus der deutschen Avantgarde,” in *Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Hannes Böhringer and Beate Söntgen (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002), 119–40.

56 For historical details on Worringer and Ernst, see Jörgen Schäfer, *Dada Köln: Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Johannes Theodor Baargeld und ihre literarischen Zeitschriften* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher-Universitäts-Verlag, 1993), 149; for Worringer’s impact in general, see Magdalena Bushart, *Der Geist der Gotik und die expressionistische Kunst: Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie 1911–1925* (Munich: S. Schreiber, 1990); on the function of the crystal mythos in modern art, see Regina Prange’s fundamental works *Das Kristalline als Kunstsymbol* Bruno Taut und Paul Klee: *Zur Reflexion des Abstrakten in Kunst und Kunsttheorie der Moderne* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1991); and “Hinüberbauen in eine jenseitige Gegend: Paul Klees Lithographie ‘Der Tod für die Idee’ und die Genese der Abstraktion,” *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 54 (1993): 281–314.

57 “Subjektiv-Willkürlichen und nur Individuell-Bedingten”; Wilhelm Worringer, “Entwicklungsgeschichtliches zur modernsten Kunst,” in *Im Kampfum die Kunst* (Munich: Piper, 1911), 94; on the nomothetic character of primitive abstraction, see Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (München: R. Piper, 1908), 52.

58 First published in *Kölner Tagblatt*, January 7, 1917; reprinted in Wulf Herzogenrath, ed., *Max Ernst in Köln Die rheinische Kunstszene bis 1922*, exhibition catalog, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1980), 87. Surely it’s no accident that “Vergleichung,” unlike other articles from the war years, is not included in the bibliography of the collection *Beyond Painting*, published in 1948 when Ernst was in exile in America.

59 “männlichen Geistes”; “reinen Weltformung.”

60 “jederzeit zur Empfängnis gespreizten.”

61 “Seitdem der Kubismus lebt, ist die Welt schöner, willenhafter: Geist von unserm Willen.”

62 “Max Ernst (dzt. im Felde).”

63 Christine Brocks, “Der Krieg auf der Postkarte: Feldpostkarten im Ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Der Tod als Maschinist: Der industrialisierte Krieg 1914–1918*, ed. Rolf Spilker and Bernd Ulrich, exhibi-

- tion catalog (Bramsche: Rasch, 1998), 154–63. In general, on military mail and the discourse of testimony in the First World War, see Ulrich's fundamental examination, *Die Augenzeugen: Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit 1914–1933* (Essen: Klartext, 1997).
- 64 "Voll elementarer Wucht sind Granattrichter innerhalb Dörfern. Alles in der Umgebung scheint der Dynamik dieser gewaltigen symmetrischen Trichter zu unterliegen. Es sind die Augenhöhlen der Erde, was darum herum kreiselt sind ihre schmerzlich phantastischen Linien. Häuser sind das nicht mehr, niemand glaubt das im Ernst. Es sind Lebewesen von besonderer Art mit eigenen Gesetzen und Lebensbedingungen. Es sind lauter Löcher mit Steinen herum, oder lauter Skelette. Es ist eine eigenartige seltene Schönheit, die hier redet." Ulrike Rüdiger, *Grüße aus dem Krieg: Die Feldpostkarten der Otto-Dix-Sammlung in der Kunstgalerie Gera*, exhibition catalog (Gera: Kunstgalerie, 1991).
- 65 "Dix hat erlebt—so wie es 1914 Meier-Graefe von den Künstlern gefordert hat." Quotation from Wolfgang Schrück-Schmidt, "Der Schicksalsweg des Schützengrabens," in *Otto Dix: Zum 100 Geburtstag: 1891–1991*, exhibition catalog (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1991), 161–64.
- 66 Ernst Kallai, "Dämonie der Satire," *Kunstblatt* 11 (1927): 97ff.: "Das Schützengrabenbild könnte ebensovot der Gegenstand höchster Anbetung eines fanatischen Kriegsgottverehrs, als pazifistisches Propagandamittel sein." (The picture of the trenches could just as well be the object of devotion of a fanatical worshipper of the god of war, as it could be a vehicle of pacifist propaganda.)
- 67 Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen*, 14–34.
- 68 Doherty, "'See: We Are All Neurasthenics!'"
- 69 Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 117; cf. Ester Milman's analysis, "Photomontage, the Event, and Historism," in "Event" *Arts and Art Events*, ed. Stephen Foster (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988), 222.
- 70 "Que peut-il contre la vie militaire—sa stupidité, sa laideur, sa cruauté? Hurler, jurer, vomir de rage ne servent à rien." Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 25; this self-image of a resigned soldier who takes refuge in irony is also shown in the reprinted letter from the field and the photographs, p. 26ff.
- 71 "Diese schöne Winterlandschaft ist die Kroekbergferme. Zwischen dem schlanken Giebel links und dem stumpfen Turm in der Mitte seht Ihr ein schräges Dach. Unter diesem führe ich Krieg. Das Haus auf halber Höhe ist die Funkerstation. Links die romantische Felsgrotte ist der Eingang zu einem tiefen unterirdischen Labyrinth, unserer Tapferkeitshöhle für den Fall einer Beschießung. Dort kann uns keiner nich [sic]. Herzl. Grüße u. Küsse Euer Max." For publication of this and the following postcard as well as additional important information on Ernst in the First World War, I am indebted to Pech, "Daß ich nicht tot bin, freut mich."
- 72 See Paul Fussell's thoughts on the function of preprinted postcards, which were used by the British specifically to convey a message of survival without having to report on the cruelty of war. At the same time and above all, they made the work of the censoring authority easier, as picture postcards also did. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 181–83.
- 73 Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen*, 67.
- 74 *Geschichtsbild*.

EXCURSUS

- 1 See also Werner Spies, *Max Ernst Collagen: Inventar und Widerspruch* (Köln: DuMont Schauberg, 1974), 124ff.

- 2 The latter occurs in Bachelard's writings about the earth. Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les Rêveries de la volonté* (Paris: Librairie J. Corti, 1948); and *La Terre et les Rêveries du repos* (Paris: Librairie J. Corti, 1948).
- 3 Elizabeth Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 31–103.
- 4 William Camfield, *Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism*, exhibition catalog (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1993), 150 ff. (with previous literature).
- 5 The first version of *Woman, Old Man, and Flower*, probably made in 1923, of which a photo has been preserved, was a purely polemical picture. Werner Spies and Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975), no. 659. It shows three father figures, a fat one with a mustache, which resembles Ernst's real father; behind him, the father/spinning top taken from the painting *Ubu Imperator*; and a father creature made from empty hulls and clothing. They are resting on a stage, in front of and underneath which lies a nude, also formed from an empty hull. Ernst probably chose to rework the painting because he was unsatisfied both with a satirical picture about substanceless father figures and with the simple antagonism of the composition.
- 6 Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources*, 73 ff.
- 7 In David Wellbery's words regarding Louis Marin's concept of the simulacrum. Wellbery, "Verzauberung: Das Simulakrum in der romantischen Lyrik," in *Mimesis und Simulation*, ed. Andreas Kablitz and Gerhard Neumann (Freiburg: Rombach, 1998), 452.
- 8 Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 8:87, 108–10.
- 9 "schichtgestein naturgabe aus gneis lava isländisch moos 2 sorten lungenkraut 2 sorten dammriss / herzwächse b) dasselbe in fein poliertem kästchen etwas teurer" (stratified rocks, nature's gift of gneiss lava icelandic moss 2 kinds of lungwort 2 kinds of ruptures of the perineum / heart polyp b) the same thing in a finely polished box somewhat more expensive).
- 10 The "breaking away" of the platform and the opening of an abyss between the lower edge of the picture and the picture's motif have been specifically diagnosed in the paintings of Cézanne and Picasso. See chapter 1, as well as the fundamental works by Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," 266–71; and Wolfram Pichler, "Schminke/Leinwand/Caravaggio/Goya" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1999), 107–29. Already with Picasso, it can be observed that this unstable zone is filled with obscene motifs in order parodically to reject the lost corporeality of the represented world. His collage *Au Bon Marché* (fig. 54) leads to the world of women but is doubly removed from the female body, since it seems as if it were made by unfolding the packaging in which ladies' underwear are sold. In the center of the picture's lower edge, white paint has been thickly applied using a stencil, and on top of this layer of paint, the following sequence of letters has been collaged: "Lun B TROU ICI." Since this sequence appears on a box of ladies' underwear, it is only reasonable to deduce from it an obscene remark (trou ici, discounting the letters that have been cut away, means "hole here"). During the "Picasso and Braque Symposium" held in 1989 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Rosalind Krauss used the example of *Au Bon Marché* to provoke a discussion about the question of whether an iconographic reading that discovers in Picasso's paintings mainly "schoolboy dirty jokes" (Robert Rosenblum) is appropriate, or whether one should not primarily concentrate on the formal problem of the picture's lower edge. For me, there is no doubt that Krauss has the right approach: "It happens in both Picasso and Braque . . . that there is a hole—formally speaking, now—at the bottom of those paintings, just below the table ledge: a half-moon-like vacuum between the horizontal of the table and the edge of the frame. Because no pictorial event is go-

ing on there, this emptiness is often filled by adding a key and a keyhole. . . . To say, 'There's a hole here,' is thus a specific acknowledgement—at least in part—of one of the generic problems of the still life as a formal structure. For Picasso, there's probably also the added erotic association of the key in the lock; I wouldn't argue with that." In William Rubin, Kirk Varnedoe, and Lynn Zelevansky, eds., *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 82. To this analysis, only the following can be added: the erotic association in no way contradicts the formal/analytical reading, nor is it simply additional information. Rather, the obscene sequence of letters is placed exactly where the heaviness, tangibility, and corporeality of painting is decided, near the picture's lower edge, where, in the illusionistic still life, a platform would have ensured the physical presence of the represented objects. In a collage that refers iconographically and formally to surrogates of the corporeal world (to underwear and its unfolded packaging), the dirty joke performs the task of addressing the absent body.

11 Legge, Max Ernst: *The Psychoanalytic Sources*.

12 To the left, blue and red veins, to the right, a fragmented blood vessel. The earth's interior in *Woman, Old Man, and Flower* may also allude to the cloacal myth, by way of a joke: the eyepiece through which the old man gazes with his eyes closed could just as well be a nosepiece. The vertical cloud speaks in favor of this possibility.

13 Regarding "offstage" in surrealism, see Ralph Ubl, "Das Gemälde als medialer Schwellenraum: André Breton, Giorgio de Chirico und der Gebrauch toter Bilder," in *Inszenierungen in Bild und Schrift*, ed. Gerhard Neumann and Claudia Öhlschläger (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2004).

CHAPTER FIVE

1 Werner Spies, *Loplop*, 44–47, 108ff.

2 On Ernst as a sculptor, see Werner Spies, ed., *Max Ernst: Skulpturen, Häuser, Landschaft*, exhibition catalog (Köln: DuMont, 1998); and Werner Spies and Günter Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre Katalog* (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1975), nos. 2103–23.

3 Max Ernst, "Au delà de la peinture," *Cahiers d'Art* 11 (Paris, 1936).

4 See "Recherches expérimentales," in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 6 (May 15, 1933): 10–23.

5 André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marguerite Bonnet et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1988–99), 1:181.

6 André Breton, *Message automatique*, in *Œuvres* 2:377; Breton, *L'Amour fou*, in *ibid.*, 2:752. On the surrealist effective history of the wall stains, see Spies, *Loplop*, 108; Christa Lichtenstern, *Metamorphose vom Mythos zum Prozessdenken: Ovid-Rezeption, surrealistische Ästhetik, Verwandlungsthematik der Nachkriegskunst* (Weinheim: VCH, 1992), 156–63.

7 Robert Short, "The Politics of Surrealism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1966): 3–25.

8 "Avant sa plongée, nul scaphandrier ne sait ce qu'il va rapporter. Ainsi, le peintre n'a pas le choix de son sujet. S'en imposer un, fût-il le plus subversif, le plus exaltant et le traiter d'une manière académique, ce sera contribuer à une œuvre de faible portée révolutionnaire. [. . .] Le contenu idéologique—manifeste ou latent—ne saurait dépendre de la volonté consciente du peintre." (Before his dive, no deep-sea diver knows what he will bring back. Likewise, a painter cannot choose his subject. Imposing one, be it the most subversive, the most exalted, and treating it in an academic manner, will lead to a work of little revolutionary scope. . . . Ideological content—manifest or latent—cannot depend on the conscious will of the painter.) Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 401ff.

9 "It is now beyond question that Surrealist works will share the same lot as all previous works that are historically situated. The climate of Benjamin Peret's poetry or Max Ernst's painting will

- be the very climate of life.” André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 233.
- 10 José Pierre, ed., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives I, 1922–1939* (Paris: Terrain vague, 1980–82), 205; see Vincent Kaufmann’s excellent rendition, *Poétique des groupes littéraires (Avant-gardes 1920–1970)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970), 115–20.
 - 11 Breton, *Œuvres* 2:4–27; Pierre, *Tracts*, 223–28.
 - 12 Ulrich Vogt, *Le point noir: Politik und Mythos bei André Breton* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1982), 88–90; Louis Janover, *La Révolution surréaliste* (Paris: Plon, 1989), 162: “Les débats avec le PC ont été pour le surréalisme de la plus haute importance en le révélant à lui-même.” (The disputes with the CP were of utmost importance to surrealism for its own self-revelation.)
 - 13 André Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 25.
 - 14 See Ralph Ubl, “Das Gemälde als medialer Schwellenraum: André Breton, Giorgio de Chirico und der Gebrauch toter Bilder,” in *Inszenierungen in Bild und Schrift*, ed. Gerhard Neumann and Claudia Öhlschläger (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2004).
 - 15 Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, 40.
 - 16 On the alterity of Germany, see Ladislav Mysyrowicz, “L’Image de l’Allemagne nationale-socialiste à travers les publications françaises des années 1933–1939,” in *Les relations franco-allemandes, 1933–1939* (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1976), 117–36.
 - 17 This article was in fact published in the *Oberbadischen Volksblattes* on February 12, 1934 (on the first page). Ernst cites a French translation: “DU SUPERZÈLE POLITIQUE. Imagination malade. Depuis quelque temps, les autorités reçoivent une certaine quantité de cartes postales, de tableaux et d’affiches dans lesquels on flaire de la propagande communiste camouflé. Dans la chevelure d’une tête, quoiqu’il s’agissent d’une photographie, on a voulu découvrir la figure de Lénine, dans l’oreille de la même tête une image obscène. On a trouvé cachés dans une affiche, un crâne fracassé et une tête communiste. Il est à remarquer que, pour jouir de cette affiche-devinette, collée et accrochée de façon habituelle, le spectateur serait obligé de marcher sur la tête. Les lieux officiels s’opposent à un tel superzèle qui pourrait alarmer inutilement la population et nuire à des intérêts légitimes. Les lieux officiels ont reçu l’ordre d’opprimer avec toute leur énergie ces agissements insensés qui facilement pourraient dégénérer en psychose dangereux.” Ernst, “Au delà de la peinture,” 42. Thanks to Ms. Danuta Thiel-Melerski from the City Archive of Lörrach.
 - 18 On the controversy surrounding Dalí’s project to situate Hitler from a surrealist point of view, see Karin von Maur, “Breton et Dalí, à la lumière d’une correspondance inédite,” in *André Breton et le surréalisme*, exhibition catalog (Paris: Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1991), 196–202.
 - 19 “Quelle est la plus noble conquête du collage? C’est l’irrationnel. C’est l’irruption magistrale de l’irrationnel dans toutes les domaines de l’art, de la poésie, de la science, dans la mode, dans la vie privée des individus, dans la vie publique des peuples.* Qui dit collage, dit l’irrationnel.” Ernst, “Au delà de la peinture,” 42.
 - 20 Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings* (New York: Schultz, 1948), 17. I would like to thank Elizabeth Tucker for this observation.
 - 21 “Bereits 1933, im Jahr der Machtübernahme durch die Nationalsozialisten, entstand die erste Fassung von *Europa nach dem Regen* von Max Ernst. Wie auf eine Landkarte blickt man von oben auf einen verwüsteten, deformierten Kontinent. Die Gebirge sind eingeebnet, die Küsten der

- Länder nicht mehr wiederzuerkennen. Die schrundige, zerfurchte Erdoberfläche scheint ohne jede Spur von Leben—Europa nach dem nächsten Krieg.” (As early as 1933, the year in which National Socialism took power, Max Ernst’s first version of *Europe after the Rain* was made. As if looking at a map, one surveys from above a wasted, deformed continent. The mountains have been leveled; the coasts of countries are no longer recognizable. The earth’s desiccated, rutted surface seems to be without any trace of life—Europe after the next war.) Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff, *Schreckensbilder: Krieg und Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993), 313ff. Werner Haftmann also reaches this conclusion, *Verfemte Kunst: Bildende Künstler der inneren und äusseren Emigration in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: DuMont, 1986), 162.
- 22 “Das Thema *L’Europe après la pluie*, das in verschiedenen Variationen entsteht, setzt zuerst 1933 ein, in einer reliefartigen, rätselhaften Landkarte, die eine Vorausahnung jener verwirrenden territorialen Verschiebungen spiegelt, die noch kommen sollten. Es ist eine scheinbar altgewohnte, aber hier aus völlig dissoziierten Elementen (*‘le depaysement’*) neu aufgebaute Geographie, die ihr verrückendes und verrücktes Spiel mit dem Beschauer treibt.” Carola Giedion-Welcker, “Max Ernst,” in *Max Ernst*, exhibition catalog (Köln: Wallraf Richartz Museum, 1963), 15.
- 23 “Robert Lebel: Pour *L’Europe après la pluie*, parlais-tu également d’un ‘irritateur’ visuel?—Max Ernst: Pendant les prises de vues de *L’Age d’or* de Buñuel j’ai remarqué au studio de Billancourt des panneaux de contre-plaqué irrégulièrement couverts de peinture et de plâtre. On les utilisait pour représenter scéniquement les murs. J’étais donc de nouveau devant le fameux mur de Léonard de Vinci qui a joué un si grand rôle de mes *Visions de demi-sommeil*. J’ai pu obtenir de Buñuel le don de tous ces panneaux et ils ont servi de fond à *L’Europe après la pluie* ainsi qu’à *Loplop présente une jeune fille*, *Loplop présente la mer en cage*, etc. sur lesquels les reliefs de plâtres sont visibles.” Ernst, *Écritures*, 427. (Robert Lebel: For *Europe after the Rain*, did you also start from a visual “irritant”?—Max Ernst: During the filming of Buñuel’s *Golden Age* at the Billancourt studios, I noticed the plywood panels irregularly covered with paint and plaster. They are used for representing walls in scenery. I was thus once again standing before Leonardo da Vinci’s famous wall, which had played such an important role in my “Visions of Half-Sleep.” I was able to get from Buñuel the gift of all these panels, and they served as the foundation for *Europe after the Rain* as well as *Loplop Presents a Young Girl* [*Loplop présente une jeune fille*], *Loplop Presents the Sea in a Cage* [*Loplop présente la mer en cage*] etc., in which the plaster reliefs are visible.)
- 24 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, no. 1710.
- 25 See Claude Gandelman’s fine analyses, *Reading Pictures: Viewing Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), chap. 7.
- 26 John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Work* (New York, H. N. Abrams 1967), 113. Werner Hofmann also stressed the perfect mortification of the surface as a crucial, anti-romantic characteristic. See Hofmann, “Max Ernst und die Tradition,” in *Max Ernst: Das Innere Gesicht*, exhibition catalog (Hamburg: Kunsthalle Hamburg, 1970), 18.
- 27 See Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 82–91.
- 28 Breton, *Œuvres* 1:369–70.
- 29 Spies and Metken, *Max Ernst: Œuvre-Katalog*, nos. 681, 683ff., 1488–91, and elsewhere.
- 30 Ernst’s pictures of hordes can also be interpreted in this context. *Ibid.*, nos. 1105–32.
- 31 “Il est bien, il est heureux que des expéditions soviétiques, après tant d’autres, prennent aujourd’hui le chemin du Pôle. C’est là encore, pour la Révolution, une manière de nous faire part de sa victoire. Qui oserait m’accuser de retarder le jour où cette victoire doit apparaître

comme totale en montrant du doigt quelques autres zones, non moins anciennes et non moins belles, d'attraction?" Breton, *Œuvres* 1:190. (It is propitious and good that Soviet expeditions, after so many others, today are headed for the Pole. It's another way for the revolution to announce its victory to us. Who would dare accuse me of postponing the day when this victory must appear total, by pointing out several other compelling spots, no less ancient and no less beautiful?)

- 32 "Delivered at last, forests flowed down to the dwellings of man and ate them. Stones exploded. Plants flew unconcernedly as though they had done nothing else during their entire existence. Wakened volcanoes peered at each other above the oceans, advanced toward one another and conjoined in lava loves under the kisses of craters as beneficent as rain. Waters were no longer united and coherent, but dissipated throughout the universe." Louis Aragon, *The Adventures of Telemachus*, trans. R. and J. Hubert (Boston: Exact Change, 1997), 136.
- 33 "La surréalité sera fonction de notre volonté de dépaysement complet de tout." (Surreality will be a function of our will to complete disorientation of everything.) Breton, *Avis au lecteur pour La Femme 100 têtes*, in *Œuvres* 2:305. Not only in this text about Ernst, but also in his first one from the same year (1921), Breton celebrated the collagist as a master of "dépaysement": *Œuvres* 1:246; as did Louis Aragon, "Max Ernst, peintre des illusions," in *Les Collages* (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 37.
- 34 Gilles Deleuze, "What Children Say," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1997), 61–67; Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *L'œil cartographique de l'art* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996).
- 35 Spies, *Loplop*, 11ff.
- 36 Exterior circumstances support the assumption that Hitler's seizure of power and the concomitant danger of war led Ernst back to Dada and the previous war. In general, as we have seen, the political thinking of the surrealists was heavily influenced by their experiences of the First World War. French patriotism and imperialism seemed no less dangerous to them than National Socialism. A photograph published in 1934 in the Belgian surrealist magazine *Documents* provides anecdotal but illuminating documentation that Ernst was looking back at 1914–18. The photograph shows the artist with a bandaged head and arm. The caption reads "VINGT ANS AVANT: Max Ernst en 1914" ("TWENTY YEARS BEFORE: Max Ernst in 1914"). Jürgen Pech has shown that the publication of this picture casts a finely woven net of surrealist allusions. Ernst with a head wound (which he did not incur in 1914) leads to Apollinaire's famous head wound, which de Chirico had prophesied in 1914 in his portrait of Apollinaire, which shows the poet as an "homme-cible" (shooting-gallery target). Pech, "Was der Taucher vor dem Sprung nicht wissen kann: Giorgio de Chirico und Max Ernst," in Arnold Böcklin, *Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst: Eine Reise ins Ungewisse*, exhibition catalog, ed. Guido Magnaguago and Juri Steiner (Bern: Zürich Kunsthhaus, 1998), 324ff.

AFTERWORD

- 1 Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 491.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, "Dream Kitsch" and "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *Selected Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al., ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), vol. 2, part 1: 1927–1930, pp. 3–5, 202–21.

- 3 Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), chap. 6.
- 4 Brigid Doherty, “Max Ernst: A Retrospective,” *Artforum* (September 2005): 295–97, 332, 347.
- 5 Brigid Doherty’s interpretation (in *ibid.*) is based on the assumption that Benjamin wrote about *Répétitions* as an overpainting. However, Burckhardt Lindner rightly observes that Benjamin could not have known on the basis of the published volume that the work was an overpainting. Benjamin also does not discuss the picture’s technique. Lindner, “Versuch über Traumkitsch: Die blaue Blume im Land der Technik,” in *Walter Benjamin und die romantische Moderne*, ed. Heinz Brüggemann and Günter Oesterle (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), 223.
- 6 Benjamin, “Dream Kitsch,” 4.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 8 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 831. On the affinity between “Dream Kitsch” and the first notes for *The Arcades Project*, see Lindner, “Versuch über Traumkitsch,” 229–46.
- 9 “Notes on montage in my journal. Perhaps, in this same context, there should be some indication of the intimate connection that <exists> between the intention making for nearest nearness and the intensive utilization of refuse—a connection in fact exhibited in montage.” Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 861.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 866.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 874ff.
- 12 On Benjamin and images, see Sigrid Weigel, *Walter Benjamin: Die Kreatur, das Heilige, die Bilder* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2008), 265–96.
- 13 “Auf alle Fälle will ich Dir einen recht postwendenden, noch viel mehr herzlichen Dank für das neue Meisterstück sagen, das soeben eintrifft. Es hat meinem Entschluss, mir den Besuch der Max Ernst-Ausstellung bei Flechtheim zu sparen, ‘den letzten Schliff und die letzte Rundung’ gegeben (um mit der Berner Radfahrer Zeitung zu sprechen). Seine Vorderseite ist der besten neuen Malerei (und seine Rückseite ihrer Kritik) um etliche Jahre voraus.” Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe* ed. Christoph Göttsche and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995–2000), 3:451, translated here.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 433. In general, on Benjamin’s writing and writing materials, see the fundamental study by Davide Giuriato, *Mikrographien: Zu einer Poetologie des Schreibens in Walter Benjamins Kindheitserinnerungen (1932–1939)* (Munich: W. Fink, 2006).
- 15 Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, 345.
- 16 Benjamin, “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” 211.
- 17 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 38.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 20 Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), 7:2, 675–77.
- 21 The connection here is an etymological one. The Middle High German *Mal* had the sense “stain, mark, sign, sin, or shame.” Modern usage includes *Muttermal* (birthmark) and *Wundmal* (scar), as well as *Schandmal* (stigma or blemish) and *Kainsmal* (mark of Cain). The verb *malen*, in Modern German meaning “to paint,” formerly had the sense “to apply marks or signs.”—Trans.
- 22 For more of Benjamin’s thoughts on shame, blushing, and colors, see his early notes on

fantasy and color (*Gesammelte Schriften* 6:109–29) and “Der Regenbogen: Gespräch über die Phantasie” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 7:19–26). Patrick Primavesi gives a persuasive reconstruction of these thoughts in *Kommentar, Übersetzung, Theater in Walter Benjamins frühen Schriften* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Nexus 1998), 307–14, and “Darstellung im Vergehen: Zum Begriff der Scham bei Walter Benjamin,” in *Global Benjamin: Internationaler Walter Benjamin Kongreß 1992*, ed. Klaus Garber (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999), 3:1610–20.

23 Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, 48.

24 *Ibid.*, 48ff. The German *Spielraum*, literally “space for play,” has the sense of “latitude,” “room to maneuver,” or “free play.” In this passage, Jephcott et al. translate it as “scope of play.”—Trans.

25 Here, I am drawing entirely from Miriam Bratu Hansen, “Room-for-Play: Benjamin’s Gamble with Cinema,” *October* 109 (Summer 2004): 17: “Within this anthropological-materialist framework, then, technology endows the collective with a new physis that demands to be understood and reappropriated, literally incorporated, in the interest of the collective; at the same time, technology provides the medium in which such reappropriation can and must take place. Such a reflexive understanding of technology makes visible a different logic—a logic of play in Benjamin’s conception of the historic role of film.”

26 Similar to hopscotch.—Trans.

27 “[Das] Mal im exaktesten Sinn des Wortes [ist] eine farbige Konfiguration die auf der Wand erscheint (aus ihr heraustritt oder auf sie geworfen wird).” Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7:2, 677.

28 “Die gegenwärtige Krise der Malerei würde, in diese geschichtsphilosophische Perspektive versetzt also auf Veränderungen hinauslaufen, die auf eine Verkümmern des Mediums der Malerei, des Mediums, in welchem das Mal zuhause ist, schliessen lassen.” *Ibid.*

29 “Die Graphik bildet die Welt so ab, daß der Mensch sie beschreiten kann. Das Auge ihres Betrachters eilt seinem Fuß voraus. Kein Übergang und keine Vermittlung führt vom Tafelbild zu einer Landkarte.” *Ibid.*, 7:2, 676.

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